

THE
LONDON READER
of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1187.—VOL. XLVI.

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 30, 1896.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[HILDA COULD HARDLY REALISE THAT SHE HAD DISCOVERED A RELATIVE IN THIS GIRL WHOM ACCIDENT HAD THROWN IN HER WAY.]

HILDA'S FORTUNES.

—30—

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN she left the lawyer's office, Hilda walked slowly towards Oxford-street, revolving in her mind different plans of action. Her interview with Mr. Fox could not be described as exactly satisfactory, for she had learned nothing, but for all that she was inclined to feel hopeful as to its probable results. She must wait patiently, and in the meantime it was necessary to get a lodging, where her box could be taken, and unpacked that afternoon.

Lodgings at the West-end, she knew, were dear, but she had once taken Mrs. De Courcy's children to see a friend in Brunswick-square, and she remembered then noticing a great many cards of "Apartments to Let" in different windows. She determined to go there, and see if she could find anything to suit her.

It was a miserable, wearisome search, and threatened to end in complete disappointment.

The smallest, darkest, dingiest rooms she saw were far more expensive than she could afford, and the dirty curtains, the smoke-grimed windows, the utter want of comfort, made her feel quite hopeless.

Clearly she would not find what she wanted in the square, so she began her search in various adjacent neighbourhoods, and—wearied out—at length took two small rooms, for which a modest rent was asked, because they were situated in a street over which the shadow of a crime still lingered.

Luckily Hilda knew nothing of this latter circumstance, and so she rather congratulated herself on her unexpected success; and having fetched her box from the cloak-room, spent the evening sorting out her father's papers, and preparing to take them to the lawyer. She did so in the morning, but neither of the partners were in, so she left the packet with a clerk, and then returned to her dingy little apartments—which happened to be on the ground-floor, and thus convenient for running to the letter-box when she heard the postman's rap.

She heard it several times, and had several

useless journeys, for Messrs. Fox and Graves did not seem in any particular hurry to communicate to her the result of what they discovered in the papers she had taken them.

They would be sure to write, some time to-day, she thought to herself, and so, for the fourth time, she ran to the letter-box when she heard the familiar rat-tat.

No; the letter was not for her, but it bore a superscription that made her stare.

"Miss Evelyn Monkton."

As she stood under the gas-lamp, with the letter still in her hand, she heard the sound of someone running quickly downstairs, then a fall, and a stifled cry, and when she looked towards the staircase she saw a girl, sitting on the mat at the bottom, busily engaged in rubbing her foot.

"Have you hurt yourself?" she asked, going towards her.

"I fancy I've sprained my ankle," was the reply. "I caught my foot in a hole in the carpet, and it threw me forward." She rose, and put her foot to the ground, but the action elicited an exclamation of pain. "I'm

afraid I shan't be able to walk upstairs by myself," she added, dolefully.

"Come into my room, and rest for a while," said Hilda, and the suggestion was adopted, she aiding her companion with her arm.

"There—sit in that low chair for a few minutes," she continued, kindly, "and then you'll be better. You were running downstairs too fast, I expect."

"Very likely. I was going to see if there was a letter for me by this post."

This reminded Hilda that she still held a letter in her hand, and as she glanced towards it her companion's eye followed hers.

"Why, that is for me!" she exclaimed, taking it, as she recognised the writing.

"Is your name Evelyn Monkton, then?"

"Yes."

"How strange!" murmured Hilda.

"Why strange? Evelyn is not such a very uncommon name, neither is 'Monkton'."

"No, perhaps not; but it was hearing the two together that startled me, because they were the names of my mother."

The two girls looked at each other with some interest. Evelyn Monkton was two or three years older than Hilda, and was a handsome brunette, with regular features, brilliant complexion, and large eyes that looked as if they could flash black lightning on occasion. She was tall, and well-made, her figure being more fully developed than our heroine's.

"Perhaps," she observed, laughing, "we may be some relation to each other, for, strangely enough, I had an aunt after whom I was named. She may have been your mother."

"Was she married, then?"

"Yes, to a Mr. Fitcher—so I have heard my father say. I never saw her myself, and I believe she died when I was quite a child."

For a minute Hilda did not speak. She had read of such an incident in novels, but novels and real life are two different things, and just at first she could hardly realise that she had positively discovered a relative in this girl, whom accident had thrown in her way. However, such was undoubtedly the case.

Evelyn took the discovery much more quietly—she had known she possessed a cousin, although of that cousin's whereabouts she was in total ignorance, not, indeed, had she ever troubled herself on the subject. Her twenty-three years had taught her that life is a strange thing, full of these kind of coincidences; and, as a matter of fact, this last one was no more strange than several others that had come within her experience.

"We must be friends—very great friends!" exclaimed Hilda, warmly, since they had talked a little while concerning their parents.

"You must tell me all about yourself."

"Must I? Where shall I begin?"

"Oh, begin at the beginning—you need not be afraid of tiring me!" answered the young girl. "First of all, are either of your parents alive?"

"To the best of my belief, no. But there was some uncertainty regarding the fate of my father, who went out with an exploring party some ten years ago, and was not heard of again. My mother survived his departure only two years, and when she died I was taken charge of by the family with whom we had lived in Melbourne, and brought over to England by them when they left Australia. They were very good to me, but they were not rich, so I had to earn my own living, and first of all I went out teaching as a governess. Then they returned to Australia, and as I had no wish to go back with them I took a room here, and here I've been ever since."

"And do you teach now?"

Evelyn looked at her curiously.

"No. You see I am only half-educated myself, and unfit to have pupils out of the nursery, so I altered my profession, and now I am on the boards."

"On the boards!" repeated Hilda, vaguely.

"Don't you understand what that means?" asked Evelyn, with a slightly scornful smile.

"I go to a theatre every evening."

"You are an actress!"

"Well, yes; I suppose I may call myself one, although I don't do very much in that line. Mine is a sort of half comic business, with a song and a dance now and then."

Miss Monkton did not add that it was to the fact of her looking well in tights that she owed her engagement—perhaps she thought this information would not interest her new-found cousin.

"And have you many friends?"

"Very few—hardly any. I have a lover, though."

Hilda bent forward with eager interest, and looked at the ring Evelyn was twirling about round the third finger of the left hand. It was a rubbishy little ring—turquoise set round a pearl in the shape of a forget-me-not, but it was pretty, in its way.

"You are engaged to be married?"

Evelyn nodded, and Hilda said, very softly,—

"You are happy, then, I am sure."

Evelyn's brows contracted, and her lip curled, while a strange expression came in her eyes.

"Happy!" she echoed, bitterly. "Ah, yes, I ought to be happy. I earn thirty shillings a week, so I have no excuse for not being happy, have I?"

"But—you love, and are loved."

Evelyn shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't know so much about that—however, it is neither here nor there. The man I am engaged to is a clerk in a city merchant's office, and I think he gets three guineas a week by way of salary. Marrying him means living in a little poky house, with little poky rooms, and perhaps one slavey to do all the work. A fine prospect, isn't it?"

Hilda did not reply—she could not quite understand her cousin's tone, and hardly knew what she meant. The latter was a little excited, and talked on for the sake of talking—it was a long time since she had had a listener to whom she could speak what she really felt, and the doing it brought a certain relief.

"If life wasn't given us for enjoyment I don't see the use of living at all. Just grubbing on from day to day, satisfied if you get enough to eat and drink and clothe yourself, seems to me a sort of living death. One might almost as well be a potato growing in a garden, or at best an animal. There is pleasure in the world, and those who are rich are able to get it. Things are very unequally divided. I see ladies who have lots of money spending their time in visiting the poor and organising charity funds, just as if they did not care a bit for all the luxuries they can command; while I, who have all the instincts of a lady—I, who hate poverty, and love fine clothes and grand houses and horses and carriages—I am condemned to keep on working in order to gain a bare living for myself, and that in the very best part of my youth!"

She had spoken swiftly and vehemently, the words rushing from her lips in an impetuous torrent that she had not the power to stem. Her eyes flashed, her cheeks were burning red, and she looked superlatively handsome, in spite of the almost fierce expression that came on her face.

Hilda felt involuntarily chilled and repelled by this unlooked-for confidence. She, too, had been brought up in genteel poverty—which is the worst of all poverty—and yet she had never looked with envy on her richer neighbours—never broken the tenth commandment and coveted their goods.

But Evelyn was of a different nature. To her jewels and laces, luxurious rooms, the admiration of men, and the power of wealth, seemed a necessity, without which existence was stale, flat, and unprofitable. It was not often she showed her true character thus, for it was not often she could obtain a listener, but her ambitious hopes smouldered in silence, ready to break into a blaze on the slightest provocation.

Instinctively she felt that she had not ob-

tained Hilda's sympathies in her outburst, so she dropped the subject.

"My foot feels all right now," she said, standing up. "It was a strain, not a sprain, thank goodness! It would never do for me to be laid up."

"Are you going to the theatre to-night?"

"No. I have a holiday in consequence of a new piece being in rehearsal. But I am going out all the same. Do you want to know where I am going?"

"Yes, if you like to tell me," responded Hilda, simply.

"Well, I am going to see my lover. He has been unwell with a bad cough for the last three or four days, and the doctor has advised him not to go out of doors in the evening. So I shall wish you 'good-night.' I shall see you again in the morning."

She left the room, and a few minutes later Hilda heard the front door slam after her. Evidently she was accustomed to being out in the dark by herself, for her manner was assured and independent, her walk swift and easy, and she went straight on her way like one with a definite object in view.

Her destination was a house in a small street in Clerkenwell, where she knocked twice, and was admitted into a tiny sitting-room, that for all its conventional, lodging-house furniture, yet looked cosy and homelike in the glow of a blazing fire, and the light of a moderator lamp with a pink shade over it.

In an armchair near the fire sat a young man of five or six-and-twenty, whose face flashed all over with glad surprise at the sight of the visitor. He was a very handsome young fellow, with a broad intelligent brow, and kindly eyes, but he did not look strong, and the flush on his cheek was too bright to be altogether healthy.

"Is it really you, Evelyn?" he exclaimed, kissing her. "I hardly dared hoped to see you to-night."

"Then you are pleasantly disappointed for once in a way," she returned, taking her hat off, and sitting herself on the opposite side of the fireplace. "Well, how are you now?"

"Getting better fast. The doctor says I shall be all right in a day or two."

"That's as it should be. And your sick uncle—is he in the same condition?"

"He died the day before yesterday, late at night; I had a letter from Maria this morning, giving me the news."

"Maria" was his only and elder sister, who had gone into the country to nurse the relative in question.

"He is dead at last, then!" exclaimed Evelyn, rather anxiously. "And has he made a will?"

"He has," replied Edmund Ambrose.

There was a moment's silence, then the girl said in a hard voice,—

"How has he left his money?"

Ambrose looked at her beseechingly before replying. It was clear he was afraid of the effect his answer would have upon her.

"How has he left his money?" she repeated, raising her voice ever so little, and fixing her dark eyes fully upon him. "Can't you answer a straightforward question?"

"I can—but, oh Evelyn! don't be too disappointed when you hear it. He has bequeathed Maria a hundred pounds, and to me he has left the same amount—the rest of his property goes to the Church."

He had been right in his surmise that the news would be a great blow to her. She had so counted on the wealth of this rich uncle, and now she found how mistaken she had been, and instead of blaming herself for her self-deception she blamed her lover, who, to do him justice, had never encouraged her hopes.

"You see," he went on, nervously, as if anxious to excuse his dead relative, "Uncle was a rigid Roman Catholic, and we were Protestant, so I really never thought we should get much. If he had been the same religion as himself it would have been different."

"And why could you not be the same re-

ligion as himself?" she interrupted, angrily. "What would it have mattered to you whether you said your prayers in English or Latin just while he was alive? You could have done what you liked afterwards."

Ambrose looked shocked, but he did not say anything. He was madly in love, blindly infatuated, with this girl. To win her was the goal of his ambition, and although he knew her character was not altogether one he could admire, the knowledge made no difference to his passion.

For some time she remained moodily gazing into the fire, her black brows knitted together in a frown, her scarlet mouth set and firm.

"After all, why should we regret this money so much?" said Ambrose, presently. "We are both young, and if you do not think what I earn now enough to marry upon we can wait for a few years."

"Wait!" she colored, passionately. "Yes, we can wait until our hair grows grey, our faces wrinkled, and we shall have what people call a 'modest competence,' and can look back on all the wasted years of our youth with complacency. But meanwhile those years are passing, and pleasures will pass away with them."

She stopped abruptly, and resumed her brooding gaze into the red heart of the fire. When she spoke again it was in a different tone—cold, hard, and metallic.

"Edmund, I don't know if you are aware of it, but I am totally unfitted to be the wife of a poor man, and if I were to marry you we should both be miserably unhappy. Hush!" she exclaimed, imperiously, as he was about speaking, "don't interrupt me. It will be time enough for you to talk when I have finished. Perhaps you think that, as I hold this opinion, I ought never to have become engaged to you, and perhaps you are right, but I always fancied you would inherit a good fortune from your uncle, and, besides that, I felt lonely and miserable, and wanted to be engaged—women are subject to these feelings sometimes—with a laugh that jarred on her hearer—"but all my life I have longed for a rich husband. Maybe you think I have no right to suppose I shall get one, but I am handsome, and good looks are not as common as blackberries, for all people may say to the contrary. Well, the end of this is, that we must break off our engagement, and each be free again."

"Evelyn!"—it was a quick, sharp utterance of her name, and there was a ring of agony in the tone, "you do not mean this—you cannot surely mean it!"

"I do. I mean every word I say."

"Then you are speaking without knowing the full consequences," he said, each word falling slowly, and in a laboured manner, as if the utterance was a physical pain. "I love so dearly that I cannot live without you, and if you desert me my heart will break."

"Men's hearts don't break," put in Evelyn, with a faint dash of scorn.

"I am not talking of other men, but of myself. I tell you that you are the only thing I care to live for, and that if you give me up it will kill me—you will be a murderess."

Involuntarily Evelyn shuddered. There was something eerie in the way in which he pronounced these last words, and they sent a chill through her veins. Clearly the sooner this interview was ended the better for both.

"That is nonsense, Edmund, and you know it," she said, with an endeavour to speak lightly. "Of course it is a trial to me to give you up, but I am sure it is the only thing to do under the circumstances. We won't say anything more about our engagement; let it be as clean forgotten as if it had never been, and we will continue friends. There!"

He did not speak; a torrent of angry indignation, agonised appeals, wild protestations of love, surged up in his heart, but he could not utter them. An iron hand seemed to crush them back, and he sat in his chair as immovable as a marble statue, and as white,

Evelyn came over to him and pressed a kiss on his forehead.

"Good-bye," she said, hastily. "If I have been cruel to you it is because fate has been cruel to me."

He did not answer or respond in any way to her caress, and she, afraid to look at him again, passed swiftly from the room.

She had not loved him—she was hard and mercenary, and selfish to the core; but for all that she was a woman, and she could not remain quite unmoved after she had inflicted a pain as deadly as though she had run a keen dagger through her lover's heart.

After her departure he remained for some moments quite passive, in exactly the same attitude; then he threw out his hands with a gesture of despair.

"I have lost her, she has left me for ever!" he cried out wildly, and he sprang to his feet, stood for a moment with his hands pressed to his brow, then staggered and fell forward on the floor, a stream of red issuing from between his lips.

He had ruptured a blood-vessel on the lungs.

CHAPTER V.

DERING COURT is situated in one of the midland counties, through which the Severn rolls its silver tide. It is a large house, built of red brick, with a great deal of stone-facing and ornamentation; and although it boasts no particular architectural beauty it has a certain time-mellowed loveliness of its own, added to by the close clinging mantle of ivy that grows over its front.

It stands in a park, where large-eyed deer herd together under avenues of trees that have grown there for centuries—trees under whose shadow Elizabeth may have walked with handsome Leicester, or the frolicsome dames of the merry monarch's court may have laughed when in the heyday of their youth and beauty.

It is certainly a very fine place—a place to be proud of, and as its estates are vast and its revenues extensive, its owner seems a man to be envied.

He is sitting in the drawing-room, this December evening, attired in dinner dress, and glancing over the evening paper in order to while away the tedious of waiting; and anyone who saw him would be bound to confess that he looked what he was—an English nobleman, patrician from head to heel. He is called the Earl of Westlynn, and is father to the Viscount Dering whom we have already met.

Opposite to him was an old lady of about sixty or thereabouts, dressed in a black velvet gown, trimmed with priceless lace, and lighted up by the red gleam of rubies set in dull gold. She must have been handsome once, and even now she retained traces of beauty, although it was rather of a witch-like order—an effect due in part to the extreme brightness of her black eyes, and the fact that her nose and chin were both very pointed, and looked as if they might meet at no very distant period.

"What's the time, Robert?" she asked, in a high, thin, imperious voice—the voice of a woman accustomed to command, and brooking no opposition to her wishes.

The Earl glanced at a clock on a bracket near.

"It is five minutes past seven; they will be here in less than a quarter-of-an-hour now. I am rather looking forward to seeing this friend of Dering's; he must be a fine fellow if what we hear of him is true."

Lady Hawksley curled her lip rather scornfully.

"I don't know about that, but I do know that Dering ought to think twice before he brings a mere soldier of fortune into his father's house," she replied, peevishly.

"Captain Verrall goes everywhere," said Lord Westlynn. "He has been staying with Dering at Lord Ravenhill's for the last three

weeks, and if Lady Ravenhill receives him I think you may venture to do so."

"I take no other woman's conduct as a guide for my own," was the haughty response, and it expressed a truth of which the Earl was perfectly cognisant. Since his wife's death her mother had taken the head of the table at Dering Court, and its master, as well as the servants, was made to feel the consequences of her overbearing temper and sharp tongue.

Lady Hawksley had only one weak point in her armour of pride, and that was the intense love she bore her grandson. For Arthur, Lord Dering, she would have said anything and done anything, but to the rest of the world she was utterly callous.

"I believe you have taken a prejudice against this young man," observed the Earl, half laughing. "You have always opposed his coming here."

"Because I don't wish to mix myself up with mere adventurers."

"But he is not an adventurer."

"Yes he is; a fortunate one if you like, but still an adventurer. Why, Arthur himself does not know anything of his family or friends."

"I hope Arthur has not had the bad taste to inquire," said the Earl, quietly. "I should not like my son to show such an unworthy disposition as to despise those whose station happens to be lower than his own."

"Humph!" muttered his hearer. "All very fine sentiments, I daresay, but I don't appreciate sentiment—never did."

Just then there was a sound of voices outside, and a minute later the door was opened, and the two young men who formed the subject of conversation entered. The snow was lying so thickly upon the ground that their carriage wheels had made no noise as they drove up the approach.

"My dear boy, I am very glad to see you back!" exclaimed Lord Westlynn, grasping his son's hand. Then he turned to Verrall, "You, too, Captain Verrall, I welcome heartily to Dering Court."

The young man bowed gracefully and murmured his thanks, while Dering approached the old lady at the fire, and submitted, half laughingly, to her caresses.

"There, grandmamma, that will do, won't it?" he exclaimed at last. "Why, you are giving me as many kisses as you used to when I was a little boy. I want to present to you my friend, Captain Verrall."

Lady Hawksley deliberately eyed the young officer from head to heel before she acknowledged the introduction. She saw a tall, stalwart figure, still wearing the furlined coat in which he had travelled, a bronzed, handsome face, and eyes that returned her gaze very steadily. Then she slightly inclined her head, and with a curt, "How d'ye do?" again addressed her grandson.

Verrall's face flushed slightly at the insolence of the reception, but he showed no other sign of discomfiture, and turning to Lord Westlynn began speaking of their cold journey, until his friend said,—

"Come, Verrall, we had better go upstairs and get ready for dinner. In one sense I am quite ready for it now," he added, laughing; "for travelling has made me jolly hungry."

The dining-room was a large, oak wainscoted apartment, ornamented with a profusion of fine carving, and hung round with family portraits—portraits of men in wig and ladies in hoops—portraits of great statesmen, brave soldiers, famous beauties, all of whom had borne the name of Dering.

Verrall, as he looked round, stifled a half sigh. He did not envy his friend, but he thought how pleasant it must be to know oneself descended from a long line of illustrious ancestors, whose glory it ought to be the task of a lifetime to perpetuate. What an incentive to brave deeds and grand triumphs!

Ah, well! After all, a man was what he made himself, not what his ancestors made him.

Lady Hawksley, if she treated him cavalierly, at least paid him the compliment of looking at him a good deal, and every time he glanced in her direction he felt her sharp, black eyes fixed on his in keen scrutiny, as if she would read his very thoughts. He was rather inclined to be amused at her.

"A clever old lady," he said to himself, "an old lady who ought to have been a man, and whose proper place is a law court, cross-examining some unfortunate witness. She would have made a splendid lawyer."

When dinner was over, and she had withdrawn, a certain air of constraint seemed to vanish with her, and the three men drew their chairs closer together, as if in preparation for a confidential talk.

"Well, Arthur, what news have you to tell me?" asked the Earl, genially, as he passed round the decanters. "Did you have a very gay time in town before you went to Ravenhill?"

"Pretty well. We were a good deal fêted, and asked out to dinner, and occasionally we found ourselves in rather queer society; as, for example, one evening when we were entertained by the wife of a blacking manufacturer, one Saunders De Courcy"—his eyes twinkled, and he cast a glance at Verrall. "But, on the whole, I think Ravenhill was preferable to London. What has been happening in this part of the world since I saw it last?"

"Why, a good deal," answered his father, with some animation. "You remember that when Sir Herbert Fitzherbert died, some two months ago, he left no will, and so there was a difficulty in discovering the heir-at-law?"

Arthur, who was busy cracking walnuts, nodded.

"Well, they have found his nearest relative, and it is a lady."

"Young?"

"Very young—not twenty yet, I believe."

"This gets interesting," observed Arthur, laughing. "The Fitzherbert estates join ours, and it would not be a bad plan to unite them."

"There's many a true word spoken in jest," said his father, gravely. "And we neither of us know what the future may bring forth."

"What is the young lady's name?"

"Hilda Fitzherbert. Her father was the cousin of the late baronet, but owing to a very serious quarrel the two men had in their youth they had not corresponded, and Sir Herbert did not know whether Geoffrey was alive or dead. Miss Fitzherbert may consider herself a very lucky girl, for she is one of the richest heiresses in England."

The name of our heroine suggested nothing to Lord Dering, for although he had admired Hilda at Mrs. De Courcy's, as being a very pretty girl, he did not know what she was called. Verrall, on his part, had listened very attentively to the conversation; and once a half suspicion of the truth darted across his brain, but he dismissed it instantly, as an idea of wild romance. Although Fitzherbert was not exactly a common name, there were a good many Fitzherberts in England, and there was no reason for him to imagine the young heiress identical with the girl he had last seen outside a lawyer's office in Lincoln's-inn.

"Is Miss Fitzherbert at the Castle yet?" asked Arthur, who did not seem inclined to drop the subject.

"No; she is coming to-morrow to take formal possession. You see there were a good many formalities to be got through in the way of proving her to be the daughter of Geoffrey Fitzherbert, but now I believe everything is settled. They were going to give her a reception of a semi-public character—a procession of tenants, and all the rest of it—but she begged it might be postponed, from which I should judge her to be of a rather retiring disposition."

Lord Westlynn's further disclosures were put a stop to by the entrance of a footman.

"My lady wishes to know how long your lordship will be before you join her in the

drawing-room," said the servant, with a low bow.

"Tell her immediately," was the Earl's reply.

He turned to his son with a light laugh as he rose. "Your grandmother gets more exacting and imperious every day, Dering. I don't think I can keep pace with her much longer."

The old lady took possession of Arthur directly he entered the drawing-room, and kept him near her for the rest of the evening. He was fond of her in his way, but the thought struck him that she looked remarkably like a malevolent old fairy, as she sat there with the fire of the rubies on her velvet robe, her high-heeled, rosetted slippers, and her ebony cane, with its silver handle.

"How much you talk of that man Verrall!" she exclaimed, angrily, after they had conversed for some time. "You really seem to be able to think of nothing else."

"I certainly do think of him a good deal," admitted the young man, candidly, "and if you had seen as much of him, and owed as much to him as I do, you would talk of him too."

"Still, you needn't constantly harp on his name."

"Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh."

"Don't quote proverbs at me, sir, when you know how much I dislike it!" said Lady Hawksley, snappishly, as she brought down her cane with a thump on the carpet. "Who is this admirable Crichton. Who are his relatives?"

Arthur shook his head.

"Ah, there you floor me, I admit. All I know about his relatives is what he himself has told me, and that is not much. His mother earned a living by letting apartments, I believe—does so still in a little village not far from Warwick, called Lavedale."

"And this is the man you presume to bring into this house, to introduce to me!" she exclaimed, in a low tone of suppressed fury.

"This adventurer, this son of a lodging-house keeper, is put upon an equality with a peeress of the realm! You are mad, Viscount Dering—you are mad to bring him here!"

Arthur looked at her at first in surprise, and then broke into a laugh.

"Why, I do believe, grandmother, you are jealous, and afraid I care for Eric Verrall more than I do for you!"

Perhaps he had hit the truth by this random shaft, for Lady Hawksley remained silent during a few minutes, her black brows making a level line above her angry eyes. She was a very jealous woman, and Arthur well remembered how a tutor was once sent away from Dering, for the simple reason that the boy had grown very fond of him, and preferred his society to that of his grandmother.

"Listen to me, Arthur," she said, presently, still in a lowered tone, so as not to be heard by the two others, who were engaged in what seemed like a deeply-interesting conversation. "You have committed an imprudence, and now you must do the best you can to remedy it. Dering Court cannot be made a rendezvous for all the soldiers of fortune you may chance to take a fancy to, and this young man must leave soon—at once! I insist upon it."

"You insist upon it, grandmother?" repeated Arthur, raising his brows, and looking amused. "I am afraid—yes, I really am afraid—I cannot comply with your request, even if you do insist. Verrall is my guest, invited to stay here over Christmas, and nothing in the world would induce me to curtail the limits of his visit."

He spoke lightly, nonchalantly enough, and yet Lady Hawksley recognised something of her own determined spirit in the flash of his blue eyes.

"You defy me?" she gasped.

"We will not put it in that way, if you please. I would simply remind you that you are putting yourself in a false position by

endeavouring to exert an authority over me in the matter of choosing my own friends, and inviting them to my own home."

She glared at him in silence, and he returned her gaze with a quietly pleasant smile, as if the idea of their disagreeing were a contingency too remote to be seriously contemplated.

They had fought a battle, and she was vanquished.

She made no attempt to talk again, so he left her, and joined in the conversation of his father and Verrall, and soon afterwards she retired, without taking the trouble to say "good-night" to anyone.

"If grandmother goes on in the same ratio as she has gone on for the last ten years, I tremble to think of what she'll be when she reaches the venerable age of threescore and ten," said Arthur, with a grimace, after her departure. "I observe that all the servants regard her with fearsome awe, and I have heard that some of them credit her with supernatural powers."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed his father, laughing, as he led the way to the smoking-room, where the three men remained for a couple of hours.

Verrall thought to himself, when he reached his chamber, what a pleasant evening he had had, and how perfectly friendly and cordial had been Lord Westlynn's welcome; and then other thoughts came to him, and he sat down in the broad window seat, pulled up the blind, and yielded himself to meditation.

Outside, the scene was very wintry. A wan, young moon had risen, (and by her light the trees, with their bare branches touched with snow, the white park stretching into the dim distance, the fountains and statues on the lawn below the terrace—all had a certain weird and ghostly air, partly due to the lateness of the hour, and partly to the intense silence that reigned.)

At last Verrall rose with a sigh.

"A fool's Paradise!" he muttered below his breath. "Yes, it is not—cannot be, anything else."

Then he undressed, and got into bed, and before long he had fallen asleep. He was fatigued with his journey from the north, and an extra amount of walking he had done the preceding day, so his slumber was sounder than usual.

He awoke from it suddenly, and with a start, for a consciousness of some presence close at hand was upon him. Moreover, he felt cold, and on discovering that his chest was partly bare, he was inclined to think that the icy air blowing upon it had disturbed him, and that his first idea must therefore be attributed to fancy.

The blind was still up, and through the window a few beams of pallid moonlight made their way, but only, as it seemed, with the effect of leaving the room itself in deeper shadow. Verrall gazed all round bewilderedly, and at length it appeared to him as if one of these shadows moved. He strained his eyes, and then he was quite sure he was not the victim of imagination, for he distinctly traced a form—whether belonging to man or woman he could not say—shrouded in a mass of drapery; but before he could utter a word, before he had time to spring out of bed, it had noiselessly vanished.

He struck a light, first of all tried door and window, both of which were fastened, and then made a thorough search through the room, but with no result. Whoever had been there had left no traces behind them, and what was still more curious, had vanished without any ostensible mode of exit.

"Have I been dreaming?" he asked himself, as he rubbed his eyes, but the answer was a very positive negation. Someone, or something, had been in the room, and had disappeared in a manner suggesting supernatural agency.

He got back into bed again, but sleep refused to visit him, and he was glad when

the first cold streak of dawn announced the coming day.

He made no mention of his adventure at breakfast, but after the meal was over, and he was alone with Arthur, he gave a full account of it, which was listened to attentively by the young Viscount.

"Can you explain it?" asked Verrall, as he concluded.

"You were the victim of an hallucination."
"No"—very positively—"I think not. I was as wide-awake as I am now, and I refuse to believe that my senses played me false."

"Then I can offer only one other solution of the mystery, and it is one you will probably reject. Mind, I do not say I believe it either."

"Well, what is it?"

"That you have seen the 'Grey Lady'—the ghost that is supposed to haunt Dering Court, and to appear in the conventional way, whenever a great misfortune threatens one of the family."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Eric, with a faint laugh.

"Nonsense, of course—nonsense a thousand times over if you will. I have only told you the legend, and I don't ask you to believe it."

(To be continued.)

THE PAWNED ACTOR.

THE celebrated American tragedian, Mr. Cooke, was always fond of a frolic on his benefit night, declaring he never took liberties with his friends at any other time.

It once happened, during an engagement at Philadelphia, that on such an occasion he was short of money, and at a loss where to raise the wind for the accustomed breeze.

In this dilemma he started up the town in a speculative mood, determined to inspirit himself in some way or other.

Having reached the corner of Callow Hill and Eighth Streets, he perceived one of those enticing signs of three golden balls. He turned the corner, and entered the fatal door, and addressed the man behind the counter thus:—

"My name is Cooke. This is my benefit night. The manager can't do without me. I am up for *Richard the Third*. I want something to eat. I have no money. Now, I propose to pledge my royal person for ten dollars, and you may lay me upon one of your shelves."

The joke was a queer one; the pawnbroker said the ten dollars, and Cooke was laid up.

The theatre that night was crowded, and at seven o'clock the manager came forward to apologise, stating that with the permission of the audience the performance would commence with a farce. He had sent in different directions, but was unable to find Mr. Cooke in the city. He presumed that the tragedian would be forthcoming in the course of the next half-hour.

As the manager retired, he was told that a boy wished to see him in the green-room. He found the boy, who presented a note written in cypher, which he at length translated thus:—

"MY DEAR JONES,—I am pawned for ten dollars; send and redeem me, or it will be impossible for Richard to be himself to-night."
—Yours, "W. COOKE."

The manager started immediately after the fixed star, and found him nicely shelved, with a plate of biscuits and cheese. In the button-hole of his coat was a piece of paper marked, "No. 1,478, pawned for ten dollars."

The amount was paid, a cab called, and Mr. Cooke and the manager returned to the theatre, where the former had just time to dress and commence, "Now is the winter of our discontent," &c.

It is said that he never played *Richard* better or received more applause.

AN OBSOLETE INSTRUMENT.

THE last hurdy-gurdy performer (says *Musical Opinion*) was a fellow named Barbu, who wore a soft felt hat, was inclined to be arrogant, and given to chaffing; he was in the habit of frequently performing in the streets previous to 1870.

Some of our readers may recollect him in the London streets; and in Paris he performed in the Champs Elysées, in the open spaces, and in the courts—not the princely courts, but the forecourts—of select houses.

Occasionally he played at the Château Rouge balls, and he also gave concerts, which were well attended.

Barbu was a true artist; he had talent and taste, and knew how to play; he not only made the instrument sing, but at times he sang and accompanied himself, and he also improvised short symphonies. Sometimes he was alone, at others he surrounded himself with an orchestra, and then he suppressed the *mouches*.

The hurdy-gurdy did the singing, the guitar and violin the accompaniment. He was also furnished with a collection of stock pieces, from which he was often heard to play the trio of the *Masques* or the sextet from *Lucia*.

As a performer, Barbu was so much a master of his instrument that in the *diminutos* he used to send the handle flying round at a good speed, let it go by itself, and then catch it again while revolving, so as to produce a swell. He disdained to send the hat round, preferring to rely on the enthusiasm of competent critics.

One day, when admiring his talent, we gave him a silver piece, whereupon he said, with a dignified air,—

"Thanks; not for the money though, but for your goodness in listening to me!"

He was worthy of his predecessors, Jonglet, Colin, and Denguy. Whither has he gone? Has he disappeared in a cloud like *Romulus*?

The man of the hurdy-gurdy has not been seen either in London or in Paris since 1870; the story goes that during the Commune he went to the barricades, and was there shot. He was the last of the troubadours, and with him, perhaps, the hurdy-gurdy has disappeared for ever.

PERSISTENT COMPLAINERS.—There are people who insist upon keeping their bread buttered side down, and they don't know it is all their own fault. There is a deformity in their minds that is like left-handedness—they never get hold of things as other people do. Or it may be that their minds' eye is out of order, and they look at everything with a squint, but imagine all the time that the crook is in what they look at and not in their own sight. These are the people who never see a pleasant day. If forced to allow that the sun rises clear, they are sure that clouds will come up in the afternoon or the wind will blow, or that the change of the moon will bring rain. They are never well. They keep their neighbours conscious of their stomachs or bowels, or a "spine in the back." They would rather have a tooth pulled than allow that they were really free from aches and pains. Their crops are always going to fail and the markets fail. They are sure that drought, cyclones and earthquakes are ready to come upon us and do their best, which will be the worst for the earth and its inhabitants. They continually prophesy of the judgments of God. But no bright, active, well-regulated man or woman is ever found in the army of the pessimists. Their common sense teaches them that we have more fair than rainy days, that there are protections from cold and heat, that each one's health is largely in his own keeping, that one poor season is generally followed by two good ones, and that it is God's pleasure to reward and not to punish his children. A pessimist's vision is necessarily narrow. He has not learned to set one account over against another, and to properly balance his books. He fails to get the good possible out of his life.

FARMER PHIL'S HOUSE-WARMING.

THE snow was deep, the skies were drear,
And wintry winds were storming,
When the neighbours flocked from far and near

To Farmer Phil's house-warming.
In swan-necked cutters, family sleighs,
And jumpers old and quaking,
They came in pairs and groups to raise
His roof with merry-making.

For Farmer Phil till middle-life
In single bliss had tarried,
And now that he had taken a wife
Rejoiced at being married;
His choice the blacksmith's widow fair,
A prize by all men rated,
Who would his new-built homestead share,
When duly celebrated.

Of old age now he had no fear,
By such a wife attended;
The feast was fine, tip-top the cheer,
The dancing fairly splendid.
"What though I've lagged till grey," cried
Phil,
"To wed, 'tis no disaster,
Since of a wife and home at will
I am the lord and master."

Loud cheered the guests, the fiddlers plied
Their magic bows at pleasure,
As Farmer Phil his buxom bride
Led off to start the measure.
So blithe the bride, so gay the groom,
It seemed their youth had tarried
To burst into a second bloom
As soon as they were married.

Dance followed dance till midnight's stroke,
When song with pastime blended,
Until at last the morning broke
On pleasures scarcely ended;
When one and all, with one accord,
Ere homeward they departed,
Upon the pair their blessings poured
Full, deep, and ample-hearted.

"'Tis well that Farmer Phil," they cried,
"So long and sagely waited,
Or with so fair and sweet a bride
He might have ne'er been mated."
The new day broadened o'er the earth
Through snowflakes thickly swarming;
And such, with festive cheer and mirth,
Was Farmer Phil's house-warming.

N. D.

SWEETHEART AND TRUE.

—O—

CHAPTER XX.

"One by one, the sweetnesses of love are gone,
And hearts so lately mingled seem
Like broken clouds!"

EVENING had come—the evening of the morrow—fair, calm, and peaceful.
Time would not stay his march for one poor little throbbing heart which, if human hearts can break, must surely for its suffering have been rent asunder then.

As Olive sat patiently on the old wooden seat, endeared to her by a hundred blissful memories of the past sweetness, never to be renewed; under those leafy alders, where love had come to her, waiting for a dreaded hour, which should have been instead a longed-for time, she felt as if whole ages of pain and sorrow had passed over her unhappy head since that last fateful evening so full of keenest misery.

"I have entered upon a new life!" she had said wearily to herself, as, after a sleepless night, she saw the dawn of another day rising in the eastern sky. "To-day I commence a fresh existence, one of sorrow. My last happy day is over. I shall be happy again nevermore."

and yet I am still so young!" she thought, with an infinity of compassion for her own woe.

The hours of the day seemed so long—to drag wearily and heavily by—though it brought a dreaded hour in its train which should instead have been one only of gladness and heart-welcome.

But it came, nevertheless, in its turn; but before, long before, eight strokes rang out from the cathedral clock, Olive left the mill and went down the creek to the river.

She wanted to have all the spare moments before that clock told the hour, to think over her desolation, alone—before Alan should come to her as he had written. So she was early at the meeting-place, and sat conning over the hard task which lay before her, thinking how to say that sorrowful good-bye which must be uttered without fail this very evening.

The river ran murmuring past just as it always did, and the rushes swayed and bent in the swift moving water. The shadows fell softly on the stream, and the birds sang their evening carols above her in the leafy alders.

Nothing was changed but herself. She, the only human thing there, envied Nature's calm, quiet peace, which she would fain have felt too, but which Destiny withheld.

While yet thinking the clock struck eight. Oh! fatal hour, you have come at last!

After the last stroke had died away on the evening air she listened keenly for a footfall coming behind, but she heard nothing—not a sound in the stillness.

She sat with bent head and clasped hands still listening, but Alan did not come. The minutes seemed hours, but she forgot that they were only minutes after all, and time was yet young. Perhaps he was not coming, had been detained for some reason, and another day of waiting anguish would succeed on this, which had been almost unbearable to her. Surely it must be hours that dragged by, not minutes, and the tryst would be unkept!

Then, while all this chaos of thought whirled through her mind, she heard the footfall on the sward by the river—a hastening footfall, which told of loving greeting, and a heart's welcome ready to be murmured in her ear.

She could not look up and see him coming, knowing how soon he would be going again from her—not for a few days only, such as this last parting had been, but for ever.

As he came quickly up to her she rose from her seat in silence.

"My darling!" Alan began, putting his arms round her, and drawing her close to him; "how glad I am to see you again!" and he kissed her lips softly.

His very tone of voice spoke for the truth of what he said.

"I am a little bit late, but I came as quickly as I possibly could to keep time. Did I make you wait for me long?"

"No, not long, Alan," she answered, in a kind of sighing whisper.

"I thought that blessed old diligence would never land me at Pont l'Abbaye to-night at all. I declare it crawled like a snail. You got my letter yesterday all right, of course, or you would not have been here now, you small darling. I am more glad than I can say to see you again," he says, fondly, once more.

"Yes, I got your letter," Olive says again, in the same voice.

Is it not at this very moment lying against her beating heart? It is the one reminiscence of her love which she means to keep until she dies. That small link at least she need not give up.

Then he takes a little case out of his breast coat pocket, and opens it.

"I have brought you this, dearest, instead of the one I gave you a week ago;" and he takes from the case a ring of sparkling diamonds, lying on its little nest of purple velvet. "It is more suitable for you than the other heavy affair, which was much too large for your dear little finger, I remember. What are you going to give me for it?" he ends,

tenderly brushing away a little brown curl from the white forehead.

"I cannot take it," she murmurs, low-voiced, with an effort.

"Cannot take it, you curious little damsel!" he repeats, playfully, not comprehending for one moment that she really means what she says. He thinks it arises from some girl, scruple or other, or a sudden shyness about accepting such a present. "And why can you not take your betrothal ring? It is only an exchange for that other one which you made no bones about last week. Don't you like it?" anxiously.

"It is lovely!" Olive answers, below her breath; "but I cannot take it."

"Dearest, I do not quite understand what you mean in this. You are engaged to me. We are affianced husband and wife; then why not take my ring?" he urges, tenderly.

"I cannot—indeed I cannot!" she says, with a little sigh.

At the sound of that sigh he turns her face up to his.

"Olive, darling, what is it? What does it mean? Tell me. You are keeping something from me, I am sure?" he inquires, quickly, and then waits for her answer.

But she gives him none, only droops her great brown eyes beneath his, and the pallor deepens on those creamy cheeks.

"You were not like this when I went away," Alan goes on the next moment. "What has happened in my absence to make you so different to me? I have only been away one week, and I find an altered little love when I come back. Now, what is the reason? Have I offended your small ladyship in anything?" looking lovingly at her.

"No—oh, no!" she responds, quickly.

"Then what is it? Tell me, Olive, dearest!"

Once more she keeps silence.

"Have you changed your mind about me?" he hazards again, more for the sake of hearing her refute such an inquiry with all her sweet vehemence of denial than because he believes for one single instant that such a thing may really be true.

She shrinks yet closer to him as he speaks, as if, though her lips might acknowledge it, her heart protested against the lie on her lips.

"Yes!" she murmurs at last, below her breath, and hanging her head in utter self-abasement and humiliation, "I have—changed—my mind!"

Alan looked at her for one moment in mute amazement. He doubted if he really heard aright. Then he says, a little huskily,—

"Say it again, Olive! Let me hear it again, for I cannot believe you mean what you say now!"

"Since you have been gone I have changed—my mind," she repeats, with infinite labour.

How hard it is to say!—how irrepressibly hard! and yet it must be said! There is no other way left to her.

It is strange; the girl does not repel him or loose his arms from about her; and yet she tells him she has changed her mind, and does not want him any longer, in a laboured, stricken kind of way, as if it hurt her to say it. All the time Alan wonders at the anomaly.

But, at any rate, her words leave no manner of doubt as to her meaning. They admit of no misconception, and he insensibly drops his arms away from her as he hears them.

The girl shivers as they fall away; it is the first severed link of the love-chain which until now has bound the two hearts in one. It is but the beginning of the end of her brief, blissful love-dream.

"Which means that you do not care for me any more then?" he asks, most sorrowfully, looking at her with his grey eyes, in which love still shines.

She stretches out one hand suddenly, as if to take his hand in hers, then she quickly drops it again to her side, as she recollects how impossible it is for her to contradict his

assertion, and that it is better for him to think what he likes, since some excuse is necessary as an endorsement of her words.

"Is that it? Is that what you mean, Olive? Answer me!" he says, mournfully regarding her.

She droops her head and is silent, for her lips will not frame the bitter untruth which he demands.

Alan takes her silence as an affirmation, and, indeed, it looks sadly like it.

"You are not my dear little love any longer, then?" he goes on presently.

"No!" she answers, in a little, sighing whisper, still with drooping head.

"And you wish me to go?" with quiet sadness.

Lower and lower bends that head as she murmurs at last, under her breath, a heart-wrung, agonising,—

"Yes!"

"Well, Olive, then—good-bye!" Alan says, quietly, after a moment's silence, which seems like an eternity to her.

At the sound of that fatal word her heart stands suddenly still in its pain. Is he going—really going—like this, without another single loving look or thought for her?—never to see him again, or hear his voice? It is too cruel!

"Do not go yet!" she gasps out, lifting her pale face to his. "I want to tell you before you go that it was—a mistake from the first. Do not think hardly of me, for I do not deserve it!" with pathetic entreaty.

"A mistake, Olive?" Alan repeats after her, with sorrowful inflection. "Where was the mistake in our love, or rather I ought to say my love, for it seems you never really could have loved me as I thought you did? It was I who mistook in thinking so, I find now."

"A mistake," she went on, drearily; "all a mistake from the beginning. It should never have been from the very first!"

"It can be easily remedied," he rejoins, quickly; "very easily remedied by our saying good-bye to each other to-night. We can then each go our own way for the future, as if we had never met—as if neither you or I had ever exchanged one single word of love or plighted our troth here by the river. Henceforth, Olive, you and I can be strangers. That is the remedy!"

"You are angry with me," Olive murmurs, in a heartbroken voice, "or you would not speak like that!"

"No, I am not angry. It is no time to feel anger, only sorrow and disappointment to find the thing you prized and loved so feeble in its affection—so changeable in a few short days! I could not have believed it of you!" he ends, rather huskily.

"I am not so bad as you think me, indeed I am not," she says, turning her mournful eyes up to his. "Perhaps some day in the future you will think less hardly of me than you do now!"

He may hear the truth one day in his life, then he will acquit me, she thinks in her desolate heart.

"I shall always love your memory," he answers, quietly. "I shall always think of you as you were a week ago, not as you are now."

"Yes," she murmurs, drearily; "think of me always like that, not as I am now, if you do think of me at all. But I am not worth it, and you will soon forget me. I am all you say, fickle, capricious, changeable as the wind. I should not have made you a good wife. You will marry someone worthier, better, and more suitable than I."

She speaks in a dull monotone, as if taking a pleasure in her own depreciation, with no desire to spare herself in the smallest degree.

"I do not think I shall ever care for anyone so much as I have loved you," Alan answers, quickly, "but I own it is better as it is. If you cannot love me enough to marry me we are far better apart. But it is you who send me away, remember."

"Yes," she says, slowly. "I could never marry anyone I did not—love. I have thought over it, and I could—never—marry—you—never!" she ends, unevenly.

The strain is getting greater than her poor, small strength can bear. If it lasts much longer she feels she shall go mad, or fall at his feet, crying—

"It is a lie that I do not care for you any more. I love you still, better than ever before. You are the very light of my life; in losing you I would wish to die, and perish off the face of the earth. This good-bye is killing me, for I do love you—love you—love you!"

But that must never be said, so it must end this parting tryst, and soon.

Then she hears him say, huskily—

"Good-bye, Olive. May you deal to another man who may come after me more kindly than you have done to me."

She knows that he put out his hand in token of parting amity; but she cannot see it for a mist of unshed blinding tears of heart-wrung anguish.

"You forgive me?" she cries, in a little, moaning voice. "Let me hear you say that you do forgive me before you go."

"I forgive you, dear Olive, and may Heaven bless you in your future!" he answers, softly.

Then she feels her hand taken in his, and bending his head, Alan touches it gently with his lips in a forgiving and most loving farewell.

In another moment he has gone. Olive hears his steps grow fainter and fainter, and fade into silence.

Her heart means "Gone!" in an unuttered agony. "He has gone, and I shall never see him more!" it echoes, in voiceless despair.

The river murmurs "Gone!" as it hurries past the rushes and weed-grown bank. The alders rustle and whisper one to another "Gone!" in the evening breeze.

A jay screams shrilly "Gone!" in the branches above; and the distant convent bells, pealing the Angelus, ring out "Gone!" Their sweet, chiming peal sounds harsh and mocking through the still summer evening air, like "sweet bells jangled out of tune!"

CHAPTER XXI.

"What's past, and what's to come,
Is strewn with husks!"

SHAKESPEARE tells us that "minutes, hours, days, weeks, and years, passed over to the end they were created, would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave."

But they do not do this to Olive? Time is more merciful to her than that, though in her first impassioned grief she may wish to lay her weary head down for an eternity of rest, and pass to where "beyond these voices there is peace."

But, as I say, Time is kinder to her, and only strings seven more days upon his neck-lace. Seven short, swift-passing days, for Fate has not any intention of sealing up her book so soon. There are still many pages in the love-history to be fluttered over and read before the white hairs shall come in the tawny hair, the wrinkles carve themselves in the cream-tinted cheeks, and the haven of a "quiet grave" be reached.

But the girl knew nothing of this. She only thought the summer of her life was ended. Then the winter might come as soon as it pleased. Old age and death, which go hand-in-hand, would only be welcome to her now.

Monotonous quiet had once more settled down upon the old water-mill. Everything was just as it had been before, only Alan was absent. Olive had not seen him again. He had irrevocably gone.

Stephen, too, had departed from Moulinot. He had started off quite suddenly one morning; Olive fancied on account of some letters he had received the previous evening by the post, but she had not been enlightened as to

the cause, which affected her very little; she was only too glad, too thankful, to be quit of him so soon. The sight of his tall, gaunt figure and dark face was a perpetual offence. She wanted to forget the past, and he reminded her of it, reminded her too keenly, too bitterly, too sorrowfully.

Neither of the two Daunts had, however, ever alluded to that fateful day. They knew from the girl's sad face, voice, and weariness of manner, that everything had happened just as they desired, and thought it more polite to remain discreetly silent on those husks of the past.

That Olive had sunk into a kind of dreaming, melancholy lethargy, speaking but little, and then only of necessity, caused them no sort of anxiety.

"It is but a few days; it will pass off. She will come round," was the verdict of the amiable pair, when they discussed the affair together in private with supreme satisfaction.

They intended her to feel so completely in their hands, so bound and welded to them in every way as to preclude any idea of her being able to emancipate herself, or assert a freedom. That having no other single soul in all the world to turn to, she would perforce instinctively sink into complete submission, to be turned and twisted as circumstances offered, and as they commanded. A most worthy programme.

One sole thing rather harassed their minds at this juncture. That was, nothing had been heard of the runaway. True, a short time had elapsed as yet; but it was a necessity she should be found, and comfortably installed once more where she could do no harm.

Then Stephen had received some kind of news which summoned him away from Pont l'Abbaye—nothing of very decided import; but he thought it necessary to go and investigate in person. Hence his early departure one morning during that week, which seemed to Olive like an age, long drawn out, and full of utter weariness.

When he said good-bye before his departure he evinced no lover-like demonstration, much to the girl's relief, merely shook her hand, saying—

"I shall not be away long, Olive. It is a business matter which requires my attention, otherwise I would not leave you. In this case it must be duty first and pleasure after. When I come back I shall expect a smiling face, and a yes! all ready for me."

Then he got up into the little cart and drove off, without waiting for any answer.

The girl looked after him down the little grass-grown road. "When you come back," she muttered to herself; "you will not find a smiling face, and a yes! all ready for you. The face from which you have driven all smiles will not be here. I cannot stay here. I must go away, somewhere, anywhere, out into the world if need be; but stay any longer at the mill I cannot. Anything is preferable to a marriage with Stephen Daunt; and if I stay I feel as though in the end they will make me, that I shall fight against in vain. I am but a girl; what can I do against them? They seem to have wrecked my life. Oh! Alan, if I had but you here by my side, I should care for nothing in all the whole world; but I am alone—quite—quite alone!"

So the morning passed on its way, and then mid-day, and again noon came floating by, and Olive, always with that same yearning regret of mind and body, wandered into the old garden, and to the low, moss-grown wall, which had a fascination for her now.

She could not keep away from it for long together—it seemed to draw her there to dream, and long, and yearn for what was past and over. The quietness of the spot, too, had a charm for her. She knew none would come and disturb her in her sad dreaming now Stephen Daunt was away.

She stood there, leaning her arms on the soft moss patches, and looked over through the apple orchard, with its knarled tree trunks and laden boughs.

While she gazed wrapt in a melancholy reverie, she saw the figure of a woman in the distance coming along under the apple trees, and in the direction of the old barred orchard gate, dividing the garden.

The figure came along slowly and evenly in a straight line, neither glancing to right or left, looking up at the sky, or at the ripening fruit above her head; and seemed to be making for where Olive stood by the low stone wall, close to the gate.

As she came near the girl saw it was no one she knew—no one belonging to the village. The features were entirely strange to her, and she was not garbed in the Breton country dress, but in a simple ordinary costume, too neat and good for a begging wayfarer, and too unpretending for a tourist or pleasure traveller en route through the country in search of the picturesque.

The woman came close up to Olive, and then stopped the other side of the wall.

"Is this a place called Moulinot?" she said, quietly, looking at the girl with a pair of faded blue eyes, from which all colour seemed to have been long since washed out; and, indeed, her whole face was colourless and faded, too, though once on a time it might have been handsome enough—a blonde beauty that quickly goes. Such a one was this.

"Yes," answered Olive, "this is the back part of Moulinot. The front way lies on the other side, round from the road."

"They told me in the village it was somewhere hereabouts. I took what seemed to me to be the quickest way to reach it, for I saw a building in the distance, at the end of the orchard where I came in, which I concluded must be the place I wanted. Back or front way does not much matter to me so long as it is Moulinot. A woman named Daunt—Rebecca Daunt—lives here, does she not? At least, I know she does, I have been told so," ended the woman, rapidly, as if, fearing a possible contradiction from the girl, she anticipated any such assertion by proclaiming it as a known fact.

"Yes, Miss Daunt lives here," returned Olive, wondering at the woman's somewhat strange manner; do you want to see her?"

"Is she there?"—pointing towards the mill—"now—this very moment? Inside that very house?"

"I believe Miss Daunt is at the Convent of St. Ursula just now; but she will be back before very long, I daresay, if you would like to wait to see her."

"Does she live alone? Is there no one with her? There should be a child, a little girl called Olive—Olive Lyster?" said the woman, again a little eagerly, scanning the girl's face with those faded blue eyes.

"I am Olive Lyster, and I live at Moulinot with Miss Daunt," returned the girl, quietly.

"You!" came rapidly from the stranger's lips. "Are you really Olive Lyster, little baby Olive, whom I used to carry in my arms and fondle? Tiny Olive? But that is many years ago—many long, terrible years, which have been a dream—a horrible dream. I forget how time has passed by"—with a shudder and contraction of the leaden-hued brows—"let me come in, close to you. I want to talk to you. It is you I have come to see, let me come in," and she pushed the orchard gate ajar, and came through into the garden to Olive's side as she spoke. Then she laid one hand on the girl's shoulder, and fastened a wistful, concentrated look upon the face near to hers.

"Yes!" she said, at last with conviction. "now I see you close you are Olive; there are the same features I knew so many years ago—the same cheeks I have kissed a score of times, long, long ago. You do not remember me?"

"No, I cannot remember you," returned Olive, slowly, trying to recall a wandering memory of the woman before her, but fruitlessly.

"Of course not. How should you? You

were but a babe then, a pretty, brown-eyed babbling thing, and I loved you. For the sake of that time, Olive, will you kiss me now?"

The girl did not hesitate for one moment. The little appeal for love touched her. If this stranger spoke truly, here was someone who had once been her friend, and who seemed to be one still—someone who had loved her in the past, and might love her still. The thought moved her heart in sudden inclination to do as she was asked, and she leaned forward and put her own red lips to the ashen cheek in a gentle kiss.

"Thank you, dear!" said the woman, softly, "thank you for that kiss. I knew you would do it when I asked you. The baby Olive I used to caress had always a winsome, lovable heart, and she has it still; that has not altered in the least I find. Ah! my dear, it is many a long year since I have felt anyone's lips on my poor faded cheeks. At first, when I was taken away, I used to fancy I felt your little arms round my neck, and your lips on mine, but it was all fancy then. I have had many fancies since, horrible ones!—but they are gone. Those years have been a long terrible dream, from which I tried to wake. I am awake now, and my memory has all come back. I can think, and plan, and remember just as I used to do before that fearful dream came."

The woman threw back her head as she finished speaking, as though casting off the recollection of the nightmare which had possessed her for so long. And a light came into the colourless eyes while gazing at the girl beside her.

"Yes," she went on, excitedly, evidently fired by her own thought, "my memory has all come back to me at last. I am going to use it for your benefit—yours, the creature I loved—and thwart them both, after all. Through that hideous dream it was always in my mind to do it. It was not all senseless raving on my part, though they both made out it was. Ah!" with an angry motion of her hand, "you did not think I was going to awake and frustrate your scheme, most precious pair! But you will soon discover your mistake now. Tell me, my dear," she added, more calmly, "have you had a happy life with them—Rebecca Daunt and her brother?"

Olive looked at her for a moment, wondering what this stranger should know about everything in this way; then she answered, hesitatingly,—

"I believe they have intended to be kind to me. I ought to be very grateful to them."

"They have not ill-treated you, then? Not beaten, or starved, or shut you up? But, of course, they have not, or you would not look as you do. Such treatment as that would tell its own tale without any need of words. Hardship speaks for itself. Still, it is not always deeds alone that hurt one. I know that well enough in my own case. Are you happy now?"

The girl is silent, and the stranger goes on,—

"You do not answer my question. I will put it another way, then. Are you contented with your life—contented to remain where you are now—to go on living with them as you have done hitherto until to-day?"

"Oh, no, no!" comes rapidly from Olive's lips almost ere she really knows what she is saying. It is an impulse of aversion to the idea which prompts the negative.

"You are not happy or contented, clearly. What have they done to you, dear? Tell me. Do not be afraid to do so. I would not harm you for all the world. I only wish to do you good. Confide in me. I am sure I can, and will help you."

Something in the woman's voice and speech seems to wring a truthful response. Olive feels she can trust her somehow—that here is no enemy, but a friend.

How sorely she needs one no soul but herself knows. Instinct guides her answer, as she says, low-voiced,—

"I am not happy—I am miserable and

most unhappy, because—because Stephen Daunt wants me to marry him, and I do not wish to be his wife!"

The woman gazes wild-eyed into her face as she ends.

"Wants you to marry him!" she repeats, with concentrated bitterness. "Oh! the villain! the villain! He is married already, and I am his wife."

CHAPTER XXII.

"Its liberty alone that gives the flower of fleeting life its lustre and perfume; and we are weeds without it."

"Yes, Olive, I am Stephen Daunt's lawful wife; married to him before you were born!" she goes on, seeing the girl's look of utter stupefied wonder and horror at this sudden unmasking of a contemplated villainy.

"The wretched wife he wanted to get rid of, and shut up in a madhouse with raving, senseless, violent beings, who made her worse than she would have been. I am not mad now, dear," as the girl gave her a little sudden frightened look. "Do not be afraid of me. There is nothing to fear. I am sane enough now. I was never very mad even at my worst. They treated me shamefully by shutting me up. I was harmless—quite harmless. I would have hurt no one. I used to dream, but they were always quiet dreams that would never harm anyone. As I say, I was never very mad, but they made me worse, those dreadful raving creatures I was herded with. Do you know why they shut me up in a madhouse?"

The girl made a motion of dissent. She had not yet recovered from the shock of this discovery. One blow seemed to follow another with fatal swiftness. Her life, hitherto so uneventful, appeared to have suddenly turned into a whirlpool of doubt, dread, and horror.

If it was all true—what this strange visitant told her, from what had she not escaped, and been delivered from! Truly, she found "what's past and what's to come, is strewn with husks."

"Because they were afraid of me. I knew too much; they were fearful I might speak out what I knew, and ruin their schemes. And I meant to; for your mother's sake, dear, and because I loved you, I meant to speak, and they knew it. So they pretended I had tried to murder them both in a frenzy of madness—that it was unsafe for me to be at large—I was dangerous, I must be put away."

"It was a lie that I tried to murder them, that I attempted their miserable lives. I never had such a thought in my mind once. I was only waiting for my chance to speak, and tell what I knew to the one person who should by right know. In a moment of passion I unhappily let my secret thought escape me. From that hour they never let me go from their sight, for they were afraid of me. Then I was soon taken away, far, far away, and shut up."

"I tried to say what I knew, but it was too late. They called it the ravings of a mad woman's diseased brain, and there was no one to contradict them. But at last my chance has come. At last, after all these horrible years!" she cries, throwing up her arms in a kind of ecstasy, while a faint colour burns in the ashen cheeks.

"They thought I should die in the prison to which they had consigned me—die, and make no sign—but I lived to confound their villainy. As my memory came slowly back to me in that prison-house so did I gather all my proofs together. I forgot nothing, nothing; not one single thing in the whole chain. It is complete, even to one single link. I placed it all together before I came to Moulinot to-day to find you."

"I have longed to see you, dear, but I waited to link the chain first lest my chance should be torn away from me a second time, and I should lose it for ever. They cannot harm either you or I now; it is out of their power to

do so," she adds, triumphantly, "for I have placed the chain of proof in safe hands. They may do their very worst, but they cannot harm any more. Their evil reign is over!"

"Oh! most worthy husband of mine, you little thought it was my doing that took you away this morning on an errand of discovery as you imagined—that the message which caused your departure came through me by other hands. You think you are going to pounce upon your poor unhappy wife, and imprison her again; but how you err!"

"My dear," she ends more gently, taking one of Olive's hands in hers, "Stephen Daunt will not want you to marry him now. He will never trouble you with such a desire again. Henceforth you will be free of him—free as the air of the heavens above. Oh! the glory of a freedom, the exquisite sense of being free!" lifting her face towards the sky in a sudden impulse of joy at her own deliverance from the bondage of years.

"Who, then, is free? The wise who well maintain
An empire o'er himself, and breaks misfortune
With superior force."

The girl shudders as she thinks of the snare which has been laid for her, feeling how utterly helpless she would have been in the matter.

Her mind is in a perfect chaos of thought as she hears this poor thing before her unfolding by degrees a tale of treachery and deceit—evidently the growth and outcome of many years past, and she recognises intuitively that it is no fiction, but solid truth.

How it affects herself, however, as she is also told it does, she has yet to learn. That page in the book of her life has yet to be turned over and read.

Then an idea creeps into her mind that perhaps this woman who calls herself Stephen Daunt's wife, and knows so much about the past, may also be able to reveal the truth about the secret of her life; and her lips manage to frame some sort of question regarding it with trembling hesitation, and dread of hearing a confirmation of Stephen's miserably unhappy story.

"Let me ask you something," she begins, imploringly; "if you knew me when I was a baby, tell me, I entreat of you, who and what I am?"

"Have they said anything to you about yourself?" inquires the woman in return. "What have they told you? or, rather, what have they made you believe?"

"That I am a beggar but for them. A child of shame," murmurs the girl pitifully.

"Then they lie," the woman breaks out, furiously. "They have lied to you for purposes of their own. Your mother was an honourable woman, and I can prove it. I am going to prove it. Listen, dear, a wonderful thing is going to happen to you—something you do not expect. It is on its way to you already. A great change is coming in your life."

"A great change coming to me!" murmurs Olive faintly, wondering. "What change?"

"You are going away from here. Going to leave Moulinot. Will you be sorry to go?"

"No, not sorry," answers the girl, with a tiny shiver. "I think I shall be glad. I have often longed to go away, when I was not so unhappy as I am now. Everything here makes me feel sad. I shall be glad to go. I have never known any other home but Moulinot, but of late I have been most—most miserable in it."

"You will not be miserable any more; you are going to be very happy, dear. This great change in your life will be a happy one, believe me. It is coming soon—almost at once. As I said just now, it is already on its way. It may reach you any moment. If this place makes you unhappy you need never see it again after to-night, for you are going to leave Moulinot this very evening."

"This evening! so soon!" Olive repeats,

after her, still in a maze of wonderment. "Where am I going?"

"To England! to a beautiful place in England!" answers the woman, with decision.

"But how? How am I to go? Shall I have to go alone?" falters the girl, again.

"No, not alone. I am going with you for one, but you will be under the safe protection of others besides myself. You will be well taken care of, Olive."

"And Miss Daunt, Miss Rebecca, will she go as well?" asks the girl, slowly.

"Yes, she will have to go. Her presence will be necessary. She is one of the links of the chain. They must both be there, both of those two; the brother, and the sister, and the wife!" she returns, with a contraction of the brows. "Look, dear, there is some one coming for you from the mill."

Olive turns quickly, and sees Nannette running along the path towards her.

"Mademoiselle, little mademoiselle, come in, come quickly!" begins the old woman, a little out of breath with her hurry, and taking no notice of the stranger standing by the girl's side. "Madame is back from the Convent, and two messieurs have arrived and inquired for you. They bade me bring you to them at once. There is something wrong. Madame looks like a thunder-cloud, so black-browed. I do not know why they are come, but it is something of importance, I am sure. Come, then, with haste," ended the old woman, quivering with her excitement.

Her quick eyes had immediately discerned that there was something very much out of the common connected with the arrival of these two English gentlemen, who demanded to see the little mademoiselle with such an air of authority, and at whom Madame scowled most unmistakably.

"Oh!" broke in the woman, who had been quietly listening to Nannette's excited statement, "so they have arrived. I am glad of it. Did I not tell you they would be here soon, almost as soon as I was, and you see I did not speak falsely. You can believe all I tell you. Go in and see them—they have come to fetch you away from here. You will soon say good-bye to Moulinot now, where you have been spending such a long visit."

The girl pressed her hand to her head. "I feel dazed," she said, in a helpless kind of way. "I don't understand it all. What am I going to do? Where am I going?"

"Home!" assented the woman, with solemnity of voice. "As there is a just Heaven above us, Olive, you are going—home!"

(To be continued.)

COMPLIMENTS of congratulation are always kindly taken, and cost one nothing but pens, ink, and paper.

TESTING FOR COLOUR-BLINDNESS.—Considerable dissatisfaction is, and we think with reason, expressed by the men engaged on various lines of railway, at the mode in which the test experiments for colour-vision are conducted. It is stated that many of these trials, in which specimens of wood are used, are made by gas-light. But the large proportion of red and yellow rays in the light produced by the combustion of gas renders it extremely difficult to distinguish between shades of blue and green. Magenta, again, which is of a reddish colour by daylight, is of a deep violet tint by lamp or gas light. So far, therefore, as the testing is exercised on wood, daylight should invariably be used, but it is different in the case of light, whether from gas or oil, which is transmitted through coloured glass. Such light is that which is ordinarily employed for signalling, and no complaint could be made if the guards and drivers were required to recognise various shades of blue, green, and red afforded by the light of an oil-lamp or of a gas-jet transmitted through such medium.

DOLLY'S LEGACY.

CHAPTER XIV.

Two months have come and gone since the halcyon June day when Dorothea left Powis Hall Asylum, and she is back at Field Royal, its mistress.

Very simple had been the legal proceedings necessary to prove her rights, and very generously the world said had she behaved to her uncle and his family. Mr. Devereux had not been called upon to pay anything on account of back rents; his wife and daughters had been allowed to carry away all their own particular treasures from Field Royal; and the Countess, out of the enormous amount of funded property which had accumulated in Mr. Clifford's hands, had settled two thousand a-year upon Mr. Devereux and his wife for their joint lives, the principal to revert at their death to the six daughters, whose marriageable prospects had received such a blow.

They were plain Miss Devereux now, the days of their being called "my lady" had passed away. Dorothea hinted moderate portions might be forthcoming if they found husbands, and she invited little Mabel to visit her for an indefinite period, when one July day she took formal possession of her inheritance, with Lord Charteris as her honoured guest, and the lady who presided over his household as her companion and *chaperon*.

Miss Ainslie had learned to love the young Countess very dearly during the time she was a guest at Kensington, and she accompanied her to Field Royal, very glad to find such a happy home, as Lord Charteris had given up his town residence, meaning to end his days with his daughter and her husband.

It was Madeleine who broke to Dolly the awful barrier that separated her from her love—Madeleine, who for days afterwards seemed to live only for the girl who had received so hard a blow. Madeleine wouldn't hear any talk of her own wedding; she declared it was an insult to Dolly's grief even to think of such a thing, and Mr. Clifford was getting sadly impatient, when the state of affairs suddenly dawned upon the young Countess.

"You must not put off your wedding for my sake," she said to her friend; "it won't make my pain a bit lighter to think I am the cause of your happiness being deferred. Dear Madeleine, let me see you my guardian's wife before I go home to Field Royal."

"I can't," said Madeleine, brokenly. "Dear, it seems just a mockery to your grief."

Dolly smiled. I think that smile was sadder than any tears.

"You have been so good to me, you won't refuse me this? You will let me see you happy?"

"I want you to be happy, too," sobbed Madeleine, brokenly. "Oh! Dolly, why doesn't that horrid woman die?"

"Hush!" said the young Countess. "Oh! Madeleine, you can't know what she has suffered."

"I know a little of what she has made you suffer," retorted Lady Madeleine.

"It was not her fault."

"It was hers, and hers only. I know Lord Asherton thinks so."

Dolly's lip quivered.

"It is the one thing hurts me in Herbert—he will think so bitterly of her."

"He has cause."

"I don't know. She is his wife, you know, and he seems to hate her."

"You are almost an angel, Dolly, or you would hate her yourself."

"Don't let's talk of her. I want to think about your wedding."

"Only I am not going to have a wedding." Dolly laid her little thin hand on Madeleine's persuasively.

"Just to please me," she whispered. "I don't think I could bear it if my trouble shadowed your life; besides, when you are

Lady Madeleine Clifford your home will be quite near me. I shall n't mind living at Field Royal if you are at the Court."

And so, in the last of the July days there had been a very simple wedding, and Paul Clifford received his heart's desire.

The young Countess was present at the ceremony. There were no bridesmaids, and so it was her hand that fastened the orange blossoms on Madeleine's bright hair. She took as much interest in the wedding as any there. She was the best sympathiser.

Madeleine had only a far-off look in her violet eyes—only a strange dreaminess in her voice told that some of her thoughts had wandered to things unseen.

"I can't talk of it, it was too beautiful!" said Miss Ainslie, in detailing the history of the ceremony to her own relatives. "She just stood there as calm and dry-eyed as though she had not expected the same bells that rang for her friend to chime for her. She was the sweetest friend and comfort to the bride. No one would have guessed she had hoped to be a bride herself."

"And Lord Asherton?"

"He was not there."

"Not there?"

"He would not come."

"I suppose he cannot bear to meet her yet?"

"I hear he won't meet her while his wife lives. You know he did not even tell her of the barrier between them; he took her from the Asylum to Lord Charteris's, just as though nothing had happened. They parted as affianced lovers. True, he came next morning and saw Lady Madeleine; he gave the task of breaking the bad news over to her. He has never seen the Countess since that night."

"And never will, I suppose."

"I fancy not, unless a marvellous providence removes that woman."

"Well, it's a sad story!"

And so it was; for though Dorothea bore up bravely, though she took her place as mistress of Field Royal, and tried to fulfil any duty belonging to her position, it was easy to see there was something wanting in her life, or, to use the words of Mrs. Bond, who had resumed the duties of housekeeper at the Castle, proud to serve her dead master's child, "It was easy to see the dear young lady was just eating her heart away!"

It was just that. She made no moan, uttered no complaint, but the joyousness of youth, the brightness of her disposition, seemed to have gone from her; she was just a shadow of the sweet-faced girl who had come to Field Royal as companion to the Lady Mabel.

Lord Charteris, who loved her dearly, did his best; Miss Ainslie seemed to live only for the young Countess, and little Mabel loved Dolly as perhaps she had never been able to love anyone else; but these friends, faithful and devoted as they were, could do nothing to lighten the heavy load that pressed so wearily on the brow of the young Countess.

She never put the feeling into words, not one of them suspected it, but, in very truth, the conduct of Herbert himself was the cause of sorrow.

For Lord Asherton was not bearing the blow bravely.

He had first attempted to prejudice the Allens against his wife, had demanded her expulsion from Powis Hall; he had then written a frantic letter to Dorothea, asking whether, if he were to obtain a legal absolution from his marriage vows, she would be his.

That letter hurt her most of all.

She answered it promptly in two single lines taken from the marriage service, "Those whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

She knew he would understand that were he divorced ever so from Magdalen, she (Dorothea) could never marry him while the wife he had repudiated lived.

After that came a dreary interval, in which no word or line from him reached her, and

she heard of him only from outsiders as one plunging into every species of dissipation in his attempts to drown care.

It was this that clouded her violet eyes and banished her smile.

Dorothea was a pure, true woman; she could have borne to lose her lover, she could not bear that he should fall short of her ideal.

Once or twice she wrote to him, pleading with him to be his better self. No answer ever came to either of her letters.

The lengthy days wore on, and each one found the young Countess sadder and paler than the last.

September brought back Mr. Clifford and his pretty wife. Dolly and Lord Charteris went to the Court to receive them, and very warm was the meeting between the friends. Lady Madeleine was the very picture of a young wife. No need to ask if she were happy; joy shone in her bright eyes, content was written on her fair, white brow.

Lord Charteris had promised to stay at Field Royal a few weeks longer, and about ten o'clock he suggested to the Countess it was time they thought of going home. Dolly went upstairs to get her wraps, Lady Madeleine followed. For the first time the two friends were alone.

"And you are happy, dear," asked Dolly, with a strange, sweet smile, "as happy as you thought?"

"I have but two cares in all the world," replied the bride, blushing as she spoke.

"And they are—"

"I wish that Paul were not twenty years older than I am. I can't help dreading that if I live to be a very old woman I may be left alone—but there, I don't often think of it, Dolly; I am too happy in the present."

"And the other care?"

"You can guess. I want my friends to be as happy as I am."

Dolly sighed.

"You must not think of us, dear."

"I can't help thinking of you. I suppose I ought not to speak of it. I suppose everyone would say I ought not to remind you of your sorrow; only, Dolly, I don't think you are one to forget, and I wanted to ask you just one thing. Have you heard from him again?"

"No."

"And you have never seen him since?"

"Never. I don't think he is in England."

"He is in England now," said Madeleine, slowly. "Dolly, perhaps I ought not to tell you, but we saw him abroad."

The violet eyes turned to her wistfully.

"Oh! Madeleine, tell me what he said—how he looked, and how he spoke."

The young wife put one arm caressingly round her friend.

"I said we saw him, Dolly, I did not mean we met him. Paul called twice, but he was denied. I wrote, and begged Lord Asherton to call at our hotel, but no answer came."

"Was he ill?"

"No."

A long pause. Madeleine could hear the throbbing of Dolly's heart. She spoke at last, slowly, almost reluctantly.

"Dear, he is not bearing his disappointment bravely as you are. He is trying to drown care, but still at heart he is the same brave, devoted man who won your love. He stands, Paul thinks, on the brink of a moral precipice. If nothing stops his downward course he must go to the bad headlong. Dolly, no one in this world could influence him like you."

Dolly sighed.

"He would not see me."

"I know he refused at first, but you might see him without warning. Dolly, he is back in England now, and there is no change for the better in him. Paul says his heart aches when he thinks of his future. Dolly, if ever fate sent you the chance of seeing him, would you bear the pain of the meeting?—would you put your own feelings aside, and plead with him for his own good?"

Dorothea never hesitated.

"I shall always think I belong to him," she answered, quickly. "For him I would sacrifice health, peace, pride, aye, life itself; only not even for him would I torture the half-broken heart of the poor creature who is his wife."

Madeleine kissed her.

"I shall not forget," she answered, and with that strange speech she led her guest downstairs.

She had not told Dolly off she knew—how that Mr. John Devereux, junior, was acting as a sort of evil genius to Lord Asherton. Bad to the core, this young man had decided that if he could not marry his cousin himself he would at least contrive to keep her single, when, at her death at least, the title and entailed estate must return to him.

For this purpose he tried to ingratiate himself with Lord Asherton, and help him in his downward course. He understood women pretty well, and, bad as he was, knew a pure, true-hearted girl like Dolly would never transfer her affections from her kindred; while, if Herbert were only checked in his wild career—even if his wife died—he would be an impossible husband for one whose ideas of right and wrong were as clear as Dorothea's.

About a week after the Cliffords' home-coming the late master of Field Royal came to Northshire, and demanded an interview with his niece. Strange as it may seem, Dolly had never met any of her kindred since she left Powis Hall. There seemed no reason for Mr. Devereux to favour her with a visit, and without knowing why the incident alarmed her.

She was sitting reading to Lord Charteris when the card was brought to her. She turned to the Earl with an involuntary gesture of fear.

"Must I see him?"

"I am afraid so. You must let me accompany you to the drawing-room, for I do not think you strong enough to hold your own in a *tit-for-tat* with Mr. Devereux."

Dolly looked up gratefully.

"Oh, thank you. I shall not mind at all if you are with me. What do you think he wants?"

"Money."

The young Countess looked troubled.

"I thought that was all settled."

"Undoubtedly, and you have been most generous to him; but the Devereuxs doubtless find two thousand a-year insufficient to maintain them as they prefer. You see here they spent five times that sum and lived rent free. I told Matilda when I went to see her she was starting too grandly. Besides, of course, every creditor they possessed has sent in their bill on hearing of the change in their circumstances."

Dolly looked nervous.

"How much ought I to—"

Lord Charteris interrupted her.

"Give them nothing," he said, firmly.

"Believe me, Dolly, it is the only way, otherwise you will be perpetually worried by appeals for money. You have already parted with forty thousand pounds for the sake of relations who have never shown the slightest kindness. Now, take my advice, and be firm."

Dolly shuddered.

"It is very disagreeable."

"It is only what I have had to do myself," said Lord Charteris, consolingly. "My dear, I had six begging letters from my sister-in-law last month. I put them into the fire."

He gave his arm to Dorothea, and led her to the drawing-room. He greeted Mr. Devereux with extreme composure.

"I presume you have come to congratulate your niece on her restoration to her home?" he said, coolly. "I assure you Lady Desmond is very comfortable at Field Royal."

But for the thought of his wife, who had egged him on to make the attempt, the Honourable John would, I verily believe, have been too cowardly to accomplish the object of his visit; but Mrs. Devereux was even more of a shrew now

than in the days when she ruled as mistress of Field Royal. The poor man absolutely dared not go home unless he had at least attempted to fulfil her wishes.

"I did not come for that," he said, grimly. "I wished to inquire whether the young lady the world calls Countess of Desmond intends to persist in disregarding her late father's wishes?" and then he came to a pause, and rubbed his hands blandly.

This address was so utterly unexpected that Dolly and Lord Charteris looked at each other in mute surprise. With a glance at his favourite to enjoin silence the old noble took the answer on himself.

"Excuse me, John," he said, bluntly, "we have been friends for a good many years, but I shall not allow you to insult an orphan in her own house. This young lady has been pronounced by the highest legal authorities your late brother's lawful heiress. It is not a question of what the world calls her. She is, in fact and truth, Countess of Desmond."

Mr. Devereux felt he had made a mistake. He tried to gloss it over.

"Then let me repeat my question. Does Lady Desmond"—there was a slightly sarcastic stress on the title—"intend to persist in disregarding her dead father's wishes?"

"It depends entirely upon what those wishes are. Lady Desmond is a minor. My son-in-law, Paul Clifford, is her guardian. All business communications should be made to him."

This did not suit Mr. Devereux at all. He knew Paul Clifford had been much averse to the allowance of two thousand being paid him; he knew, moreover, that until the young Countess came of age and ratified the promise of this he could not look on it as a certain income.

He had come down expecting to find Dolly alone, and to frighten her inexperience. He certainly was disappointed.

"We are awaiting your explanation," said Lord Charteris, courteously.

Then the Honourable John began: his brother had allowed him ten thousand a-year. It was clear the late Earl had intended to settle this income on him for life. He demanded rather than asked his niece to carry out this intention.

"You must be mad," said Lord Charteris, coldly. "Do you know ten thousand is the whole amount of the income bound to accompany the title?"

"I am perfectly aware of it."

"And you fancy Lady Desmond would be allowed to despoil herself of such a sum?"

"She's rich enough without it. My brother left her all his savings, and there's twenty thousand a-year been put by for her these ten years. I should say she has half-a-million of money, besides her thirty thousand a-year."

"I believe she has."

"And she's one girl, used to poverty, while I have a son and six daughters to bring up. I think ten thousand a-year's not half of what she ought to do for us."

Lord Charteris had learned many things in the last few weeks, the identity of his sister-in-law with Mrs. Dell among them. The tone in which he answered was cutting in its satire.

"Shall I tell you a few of the things Lady Desmond might have done for you and yours? She might have brought your wife to penal servitude for perjury; she might have sued you for a hundred thousand pounds, beside interest and compound interest; she might have turned your daughters penniless upon the world. If ever you allude again to what the Countess ought to do for you I shall certainly remind her of these neglected duties."

John Devereux sneered in a manner not good to see.

"You hold the trumps now, but you won't always. There only that girl's life between us and Field Royal. The whole world knows she is in love with a scoundrel who can't

marry her. In a few years I shall be back here with my family."

"Unless you poison your niece I doubt it exceedingly," returned Lord Charteris. "The Countess is eighteen, and possessed of an excellent constitution. Even if she leaves no heirs to Field Royal there is every chance of her keeping you out of title and estate for fifty or sixty years. I don't fancy either you or your son will ever again enter Field Royal as its master."

Mr. Devereux felt nonplussed. From first to last his visit had been a great failure. He tried to take another tone, and plead as a suppliant instead of demanding as a bully, but it was all in vain.

Dorothea had too much confidence in Lord Charteris to scorn his advice. She answered her uncle simply and firmly she had already made provision for him and his family; she was not disposed to increase it.

"You look worn out."

This was the Earl's speech when their unwelcome visitor had at last departed and Dolly was sitting in a low chair, two bright pink spots on her cheeks, and her eyes shining with a strange, almost unnatural brilliancy.

"I am so tired!"

"I ought not to have let you see him. Well, I think we have settled your kinsfolk pretty thoroughly. I don't expect any of them will come to disturb us again in a hurry."

Dorothea was trembling from head to foot, as one smitten with a sudden ague.

"Surely you are not letting Mr. Devereux's threats alarm you? My dear child, be reasonable. How can your uncle have it in his power to harm you?"

Dolly trembled. She tried to speak, but only a sigh escaped her.

Lord Charteris was really alarmed.

"My dear, you know I love you," he said, gravely; "you know your happiness is as dear to me as Madeleine's. Tell me what it is that troubles you?"

Then Dolly sobbed out the truth. Mr. Devereux had sworn she should repent her refusal to help him. She knew he was powerless to injure her, but there was Herbert. He might hurt him!

"Hardly likely," said Lord Charteris, cheerfully. "I cannot believe Lord Asherton would consort with those he must deem your enemies."

"I don't know," said Dolly, simply. "He is angry with me. Oh, Lord Charteris, why are we so unhappy?"

The old Earl put one arm round her. The girl who had never known a father's love rested her head lovingly on his shoulder.

"I can't forget him," she said, gently. "I wouldn't if I could. I remember him every hour of my life, and I thank Heaven for his love and the happiness it gave me! It isn't our parting tries me most—I could bear that; I could have nothing but pity for his wife—only it is the way he takes it upsets me. I can't bear to think of him as falling away from his nobler self. I loved him so, Lord Charteris, I think I would have died that he might be happy; and it is just my love that has been his ruin!"

"You mustn't speak like that, my darling," said the old Earl, his own eyes not quite dry as he listened to her; "you mustn't think it, indeed, indeed. The love of one as pure and innocent as you couldn't be a man's ruin. Fate has been cruelly hard upon you both, poor young things! But you must have patience. Take my word for it, child, Asherton is too fine a fellow to go to the bad. He'll pull himself together, and make you proud of him yet."

"It is just that," whispered Dolly. "If I might be proud of him, if I might see him brave and true, respected and esteemed, I think I could bear it, even if I never saw his face again; but now—"

"They shouldn't have told you, dear."

"No one told me quite," answered Dolly. "I think I gathered it for myself. Perhaps

instinct helped me. I seemed to know without the telling that my darling was stepping farther and farther from his better self, that he was unhappy, and whatever readiness he was guilty of, the cause of it, from first to last, was me."

"This is wicked, Dolly."

"I know," said the poor girl, faintly. "I tell myself so, and yet I feel it."

The Earl was silent just a moment.

"There is a sadder heart than yours," he said at last. "My dear, think of his wife."

"I think of her every hour of the day, and pray for her."

"It is she who has cause for reproach," said Lord Charteris, "not you. By her desertion she has left Herbert to a lonely life; by a cruel fraud she made him think he was free. I am not a hard man, Dolly, but when I think of that woman I feel indignant. I pity her, for I think her whole heart must be filled by the most bitter remorse, but still, to my thinking, she deserves her sorrow; she has wrecked two lives."

"But not wittingly. You call her deception a cruel fraud; Bertie condemns it; but to my mind it was one of the noblest acts of self-sacrifice I ever knew."

"You are too generous."

"I think so."

"Where is she still?"

"At Powis Hall."

"Herbert tried to remove her, did he not?"

Lady Desmond blushed.

"Yes," she admitted, "he did. It is the action of his I most deplore; but they would not listen to him. Dr. Allen and his sister will keep Magdalen with them always."

"Do they know her history?"

"They know it now!" a painful stress on the last word. "They love her very dearly, and I think she is of real use to them at Powis Hall."

"I suppose she is quite a young woman?"

"Six-and-twenty."

"Dolly!" and Lord Charteris looked at the girl pitifully, "how can you speak so calmly? Do you never think of what might be if this poor wreck of womanhood were taken from your path?"

"Never. I have given up all hope of being Herbert's wife, only I cannot help my love for him, and by that love it wounds me more than I can say to hear my hero is not true to himself."

"You are a strange child!"

"Am I? Why? Because loving once I love for ever? I think it is in my blood. Lord Charteris, my mother was the same."

She went away to dress for dinner; the etiquette of her station was never neglected by the young Countess. Her maid attired her to-night in robes of soft white silk, trimmed with filmy lace. She wore a string of pearls round her neck, and pearls shone on her fair white arms, while a bunch of forget-me-nots rustled in her golden hair.

They were her favourite flower, and they always reminded her of Herbert when he was staying Field Royal. Before she knew the secret of his love he had often brought her bunches of the pretty blue flower from the banks of the silvery Way; it grew among the rushes luxuriantly.

As she dressed to-night Dolly fell to wondering what Herbert had done with his unfinished picture. Ah! how well she remembered her first meeting with him by the river's bank, where he had told her his plan for a masterpiece, and how "Haunted" was to hang on the walls of the Academy, and make his name famous throughout the land!

It was only six months since they had met for the first time—six months since she had stood with him on the river's bank, and listened to her mother's story. How very long ago it seemed then she had been a nameless, friendless child; now she was a peeress in her own right, and one of the richest women in England. But in spite of wealth and title Dolly would have given all she had—aye, years

from her own life even—to be able to go back to that day when she wandered heart-whole and fancy free by the picturesque banks of the silvery Way.

Since her return to Field Royal she had shunned the spot, had felt as though the low, sweet music of the water would fill her with pain unspeakable; but to-night her feeling had changed. She seemed possessed by a restless longing to stand once more where she had listened to Herbert's love-story, and to hear once more the soft, dreamy lullaby caused by the river's movement.

"I have never been there since we parted," she thought, sadly. "I have never even seen the place where my darling asked me to be his—since I knew we must be parted. I will go there to-night. My heart can't ache much worse than it does now, and maybe it will ease its pain to stand where I first learnt our secret, and to remember that, short as was our love-dream, I have once been happy."

Dinner was at six. Miss Ainslie thought she had never seen the Countess look more lovely. There was a strange, dreamy, far-off expression in Dolly's violet eyes, but the sadness seemed lifted from her face, and her smile was almost happy. Little Mab, who made her appearance with the dessert, nestled up to the Countess, and called her her pretty cousin. In truth, sweet as she always looked, there was an extra charm about Lady Desmond to-night which struck all hearts.

"You are not going out, surely?"

The ladies were in the drawing-room now. Dolly had twisted a wonderful transparent, gauzy-looking scarf about her head and shoulders, and stood opening the French windows. Her golden hair seemed to shine from the gauze scarf as from a silver frame; there was a half-smile on her parted lips.

"I think so."

"You will take cold."

"I shall not be long, dear Miss Ainslie. I am only going in the grounds, and it will do me good. Mab, I shall be back long before your bed-time."

She walked on and on with almost feverish impatience. Never in the two months she had reigned as mistress of Field Royal had the slightest wish to visit the river's banks come to her. To-night she felt simply that she must go. She could not have explained the reason, indeed she did not know it herself; but a feverish longing was in her to visit the scenes of her brief love-story. She only felt she must stand again where she had stood to listen to Herbert's vows.

It was not a long walk. The soft moon had risen early, and was now shedding her silvery rays over the beautiful grounds. There was not a breath of air, even the leaves of the trees were motionless; all nature seemed in profound repose. No human creature was abroad; Dorothea was all alone. She could hear the beatings of her own heart as she pressed onwards, ever onwards, still possessed by that strange impulse that caused her to hurry to the river bank.

She had gained her goal at last. She stood upon the leaf-strewn bank, with the silvery reality of the Way stretched before her—just as she had stood five months before mourning over Mr. Sinclair's departure. He had found her there and changed her sorrow into joy; to-night she stood alone, more hopeless still. It was not his leaving she mourned—it was his leaving the path of honour and repute.

He never could be hers; Magdalen's life stood between them, and Dolly would not think of wedding him, even if the law pronounced his freedom. No, she stood there, with no hope of being his wife, yet loving him fondly, tenderly, as it seems to her few women know how to love.

"Oh, Bertie!" echoed the girl's aching heart; "we may be parted here, but we must be together in the hereafter, if you will only come!"

"And if I cannot come?"

She started. There, standing close beside



[“I AM ONLY GOING IN THE GROUNDS, AND IT WILL DO ME GOOD,” SAID THE COUNTESS.]

her in the moonlight, was the lover of her heart—Herbert, Lord Asherton.

The strangest part of all was that Dolly did not feel surprised; it seemed to her, by her utter lack of all astonishment, that she must have almost expected him.

“Herbert!”

“I thought you would scorn me, Dolly!”

“Scorn you, my darling?” said the girl’s sweet voice. “Never! We may be as strangers always, Bertie, all through our lives, but I shall always love you more than the whole world!”

“And yet you sent me away!”

“Could I do otherwise?”

“Yes, if you had loved me.”

“I loved you too well to let you commit a wrong for me; I would not let you break a heart, almost crushed already, for my sake.”

He opened his arms and strained her to his heart, he pressed passionate kisses upon her face and lips; for a brief space he forgot the awful barrier between them, and she—oh! can you blame her?—she had not the courage to remind him of it.

Remembrance came too soon to both of them.

Dolly unclosed herself from that embrace, and stood leaning against a tree; Herbert was opposite, with folded arms, gazing at her as one who cannot gaze enough. He asked aloud,—

“Have they told you?”

“Told me what?”

“That I am not fit for you to speak to—that I am far on the downward course.”

“But you will stop?” she pleaded. “Oh, Bertie! for my sake, you will stop?”

“What good will it do?”

Her beautiful eyes shone on him with an expression of angelic purity.

“It will ease my pain.”

“Dolly!”

“Only let me know you true to your better self—only let me be able to think of you as

brave and generous, noble and true. Grant me this, and I can bear the rest, Herbert.”

“You don’t know what it is,” he said, bitterly. “What is my life worth? What have I to look forward to? If I waited twenty years I might still be as far from you.”

Dolly put her little white hand in his.

“You have duties,” she whispered, hoarsely, “estates to manage, dependents to improve, a father and mother to cherish and to make proud of you! Only fulfil these, and peace will come.”

He groaned.

“It is the being so near you and yet so far unman me,” he said at last. “Dolly, I think I shall go to Australia.”

“Australia!”

“It is very far from you, but am I any nearer you really in London? If I go to Australia, and travel among new scenery, I don’t say I shall forget you—I don’t want to do that, and I never could—but it may save me from plunging broadcast in the temptations to drown my misery which abound at home.”

Her lips formed the one word,—

“Go.”

“I think it is for the best,” said Herbert, dearly; “and Dolly, at least I leave you in good hands; you will be well cared for. And, little girl, remember, wherever you are, and whatever happens to you, there is one in the far off Southern hemisphere who loves you better than his own soul—who would deem no sacrifice too great, no waiting too long, if only in the end he might call you his.”

Again she took his hand, and then, looking at him with her starlike eyes, she pleaded,—

“You are going away, it may be for years. Bertie, grant me one boon before you go?”

“Darling, I can refuse you nothing.”

“Promise me to think kindly of her—your wife—to try to forgive her even as you hope to be forgiven?”

“You have asked a hard thing, sweet-

heart,” he answered, brokenly, “but you have my word. Dolly, say good-bye.”

“Are you going to London to-night? Did you come down to-day?”

“No to both questions, dear. I was wandering about aimlessly, uselessly, and I chanced to find myself only ten miles from Field Royal. I felt I must come here. I had no thought of meeting you; I only hoped to see the spot where we had been so happy.”

“I have never come here before to-night,” she whispered. “Bertie, I think Heaven must have sent me.”

“To give me fresh hope and courage, dear?”

“No,” she corrected, “to let me see you once more. Thank Heaven, I came to-night.”

And later on she thanked Heaven even more fervently—for a stronger reason than ever she suspected made it for Lord Asherton’s lifelong welfare—that on this fair September evening he and his lost love had stood together by the silvery Way.

(To be continued.)

DYING WOOD.—A new process for speedily drying wood, hides, wool, grain and other articles of commerce surcharged with moisture, has been tested in England with most satisfactory results. It is called the cool-dry air process, and is the invention of an American. The *Times* says the name indicates the whole secret of its success. “Materials to be dried are placed in a chamber, through which a current of moderately warm, dry air is passed continuously, and the test of experience shows that air so deprived of moisture acts as an absorbent in a manner that without such a test would have been deemed impossible.” It is estimated that a method of cool-air drying, applicable to East India tea, would add £200,000 a year to the saleable value of the product. Whether tea can be successfully treated by this particular process is not stated.



[BY THE LIGHT OF THE LANTERNS PAOLA SAW HER HUSBAND LYING FACE DOWNWARDS.]

NOVELLETTE.]

JABEZ HOLT'S WIFE.

CHAPTER V.

"All day within the dreamy house
The doors upon their hinges creak'd;
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,
Or from the crevice peer'd about.
Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors,
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
Old voices called her from without,
She only said, 'My life is dreary.'"

THE sun was shining out bravely two days later, doing his best to make the bleak country around look its best, when Jabez and his wife arrived at the farm.

The housekeeper was at the door to meet them; and anyone who knew Jabez well would have seen that he flinched a little under Mrs. Carillon's steady gaze.

However, he had not to endure it very long, for she transferred it to Mrs. Holt, and there was an ominous tightening of the thin lips as she took in all the fair beauty of the young face and the gracefulness of the lithe, elegantly-attired figure, for Jabez had been liberal in the way of furbelows and frippery for his wife, and her costume showed it in every detail.

He wore his homespuns, and a greater contrast surely never existed between a married couple than did between these two.

She, fresh, soft, blooming, youthful; he, old, hard, withered, wrinkled. She looking like a lady; he like a son of the people. She the emblem of youth and beauty; he that of ugliness and old age.

Mrs. Carillon felt she could almost—almost, not quite—forgive him the step he had taken, for she knew he had laid up grief and misery for himself in the future.

It was not likely that "Meeces Holt" would

trouble herself much about Jabez when she could have anyone she liked sighing at her feet.

Why, no; certainly not. She would be amply avenged in the future; every pang she had experienced Jabez would feel in a tenfold degree, and the—well, she would look on and gloat over his misery and misfortune.

"Will ye let us have tea at once?" broke in her master's voice, dispelling her train of ideas rather rudely.

"Ay. Will ye ha' it here or in te parlour?"

"Which would you like, my dear?" asked Jabez of the new mistress.

"Oh, here, please," she answered at once, in tones so musical that they astonished one of her listeners, who had never heard anything so sweet before. "This is a delightful room."

"Very well; here, then," ordered Jabez, and Rachel set to work on her duties with a black scowl on her brow.

"Is every room as quaint as this?" asked Paola, as she made a tour of inspection, noting the tall clock, the Elizabethan press, the beamed ceiling, the panelled walls, and the dingy portraits.

"Yes, they're all much alike," acknowledged their owner. "Your bedroom is over this, and furnished in te old style. If ye don't like it when ye see it I'll have it all altered, an' ye shall choose for ye'self."

"Thanks, thanks," returned the young wife, gratefully, for she was touched by his constant desire to please her. "I am sure I shall like it as it is. Old things have a great charm for me."

"Then ye'll ha' plenty o' them here," announced the housekeeper, with a sidelong glance at Jabez. "There's nathin' much that can truthfully be ca'd young or fress here."

Paola was a little surprised at this outbreak, and considerably more so when tea was ready to see this rough woman seat herself too, and commence to eat in a voracious fashion.

She made no remark, and took her place at the top of the table behind the hissing urn; and while she manipulated the blue cups she was serenely and happily unconscious that her husband's housekeeper could hardly contain her bitter wrath and rage against her, and that the coarse, horny hands were itching to snatch up a knife and bury it deep in the soft white throat of the woman whom she considered was usurping her rights, taking the place she had occupied for over twenty years, thrusting her into the background, forcing her to take a second place.

There was some excuse for her soreness, and she wasn't going to be pacified all at once.

"How have matters bin gettin' on?" inquired Jabez, after a while, overcoming the reluctance he felt at addressing her in his eagerness to hear that things were well with his cattle and stores.

"Badly enou'," she answered, with suppressed ferocity. "Can ye expect things to be flourishin' when te master's eye's not there te overlook te carls?"

"You've been here," he retorted.

"I'm na te master," she replied, drily.

"An' what's amiss?" he demanded, after a pause.

"Black Bees ha' lost her calf. Slung te soon."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, with evident annoyance.

"Bolting Ben's injured his fetlock sa bad they dinna think he'll be on ye in te future. Te mangels ha' all given out."

"Already? They should ha' lasted well till April."

"Mebbe they would ha' done sa had ye been here te keep watch on they whose hands are te lavish."

"Well, I wasn't here," he said, testily, "so don't allude to my absence again."

"Na, I wunt," she agreed, sullenly, scoring up another grudge to be paid off against him

for the rebuke administered before the "dollie," "na to onythin' else if ye like."

"Tell me just what's necessary for me to know."

"Well, Hanne wants a raise o' wage, and Benf a holiday, and there's an order for hams from Blotchley, an' Peter Royle he were here twa days ago askin' for ye wantin' to see ye vera much."

"What about did he say?"

"Na exactly. I s'pose it's money he wants. But he were moss's usual perrain'."

"Wonder what he wanted to see me about?" muttered Jabez, an anxious look on his face.

"Ye'll know soon," returned Rachel, her eyes fixed steadily on his troubled face. "He'll come down when he knows ye's back."

"Yes, I s'pose so."

"An' who do ye say is takin' a look round to place now?" she went on, as she rose and commenced rummaging the tea-things with an unnecessary noise and rattle.

"Yes, I'll go, my dear," to his wife, whose foreign name he could never pronounce satisfactorily. "Maybe ye're tired. Would ye like to go to bed?"

"Yes, I should," she answered, appalled at the prospect of being left alone to a sit-d-stay with her husband's sullen-beamed, ill-favoured housekeeper.

"Rachel, show Mrs. Holt to her room, an' I hope ye've made down a good fire," he remarked, as he left the parlor.

"Ay," she responded, grimly; "it's all foine and comfort'ble for to leddy, never fear. She'll ha' nathin' to complain o'."

"Perhaps ye'll be as good as to wait till I done this clearing," she went on a moment later, with a scowl at her mistress.

"Yes, yes," said Paola, quickly, sinking on to a seat in the single nook, and gazing steadily at the fire to avoid the glare of those stony, cruel eyes, that seemed to say,—

"I'd kill you, if I could without fear of being found out."

With a woman's quick and ready tact, she divined the cause of this woman's black looks and scant courtesy of manner, knew that she had aspired to the position Jabez had given her, and her heart sank a little at the prospect of daily—nay, almost hourly—companionship with this woman, for she knew her husband's occupation would keep him from home a great deal, and that she would be left at the mercy of a sullen, disappointed, revengeful boor, who had it in her power to make things uncomfortable for her.

However, she determined to meet her insolence with as much coolness and dignity as she could muster, and when Rachel said "Now," in her shortest and most repellent manner, and stood candle in hand ready to light her upstairs, she rose quietly, and picking up her furred mantle and hat, followed her conductress up the wide oaken staircase without a word.

"I s'pose this'll hardly suit ye, na half grand enow," snapped the housekeeper, as she proceeded to light the candles in the massive silver candlesticks on the carved dressing-table.

"You are mistaken, it will suit me very well," returned Mrs. Holt, calmly, as she looked round and took in all the details of the quaint room, which, like the one below, was panelled in oak, low cailed and cross-beamed, with tapestried chairs, a huge four-post bedstead, elaborately carved, a swing mirror to match on the dressing-table, a linen chest, evidently of Elizabeth's era, a great time-darkened press that took up nearly half one side of the room, and a noble mantelpiece, above which hung a finely-executed portrait in oils of a very beautiful woman in the riding dress worn some eighty or ninety years ago, with a large cavalier hat shading her handsome face, and a profusion of chestnut curls falling over her neck and bosom, and reaching below her slender waist.

"I only hope then that ye'll be as well

pleased with all t'other arrangements in to iarn, an' that ye wa'n't find fault with old customs and ways," said Rachel, insolently.

"I have no doubt that I shall be well pleased with most," Paola laid stress on this word—"of the arrangements of my husband's house. Still, if I choose to make alterations or find fault, I shall do so, as I am mistress here," and having announced this she stood facing the housekeeper, meeting her imperious gaze with a cool, steady one; and Rachel, finding herself beaten, retired muttering to herself; and when the door closed on her, Paola locked it to guard herself from further intrusion, and then did what most other women in her position would do, sank on her knees by the bed, and burying her face in her hands wept bitterly.

She felt lonely and depressed, missed the prattle of the little ones and the noises that made the Bloomsbury house seem full of life. Here there was no sound save the sighing of the March winds as they careered madly in and out amid the twisted chimney-stacks and dashed against the many-paned windows.

Her room looked over the flower-garden, the farm buildings were at the back, so there were none of the sounds heard inseparable from busy country life.

After a time she grew calmer, and, rising, began to inspect the apartment more closely. The glowing fire on the wide tiled hearth diffused a rosy light around, flashing vividly now and then on some particular object, brought it out distinctly; but the portrait was somewhat in shadow, and she took one of the candlesticks of the dressing-table and held it close to it to get a better view.

Something in the handsome pictured face fascinated her, the eyes, soft, grey, luminous eyes, thickly black-lashed, seemed full of life and expression as they met hers and held them.

In after days she understood what the spell was they wrought on her; then drowsiness stole over her senses, and, hastily unrobing, she lay down on the great, four-post funeral bed, and was soon asleep.

The first year of Paola's married life was not altogether happy, though it must be acknowledged that the fault was not her husband's. He simply idolised the beautiful woman who had become his, worshipped her with a dog-like fidelity almost painful to behold, and never took his eyes off her face when they were together.

Whatever else he was mean about he was not over his wife. She had what she liked; every wish she expressed was gratified. She could have as many fine clothes as she wished, ask whom she liked to the farm, only there were not many to invite in that sparsely populated part.

He bought a fine piano for her and a phaeton and pair of ponies, and did all he could to please, daily showing, by some act or gift, the strength and truth of his affection.

Still he was jealous, and let her see that he was when there was the slightest, and generally when there was no occasion for it; and the fondness of such a man as Jabez Holt, to such a woman as Paola, was likely to inspire only horror and repugnance. He was coarse, narrow-minded, badly educated. He was no companion for her. Her life was a lonely, isolated sort of one.

True she had invited all the Munros to stay at the farm the summer following her marriage; true that they had all come, and stayed several weeks, brightening and enlivening the place for a while; but then, when they left, the blank desolation and solitude seemed all the greater. True she had entirely escaped from drudgery and hard work, for Jabez would not hear of her doing anything more fatiguing than dusting the Worcester teapots and Salopian cups, which he had purchased from Royle. Still there were times when she would have been glad of any occupation, no matter how hard, to break the horrible monotony of the hours spent in her north country home.

She interested herself as much as possible in her husband's pursuits, and in all matters appertaining to the farm. Yet there was a void in her life, a longing for something, she hardly knew what; a wish that never took actual form or shape, and still was ever haunting her mind and senses; a longing, perhaps, for sympathetic intercourse with some human being like unto herself.

She might well have said with Mariana, "My life is dreary," for she utterly lacked intercourse with people of her own calibre and education.

She had many friends among the four-footed beasts, for when the cows at milking time would come up from the meadow, loud-breathed and blundering, and stand in the shallow gleam of the westerling sun, their soft eyes would turn to the spot from whence she came; the balls of yellow down that had the audacity to call themselves dainties seemed to know her, and would run with the old hen to catch grain from her hands; one or two pet lambs were always straying about the door, looking for her; while her ponies and the horses would neigh loudly at her approach, and stretch out their stony necks to meet inquisitively, and seek for the luscious plums and dainties she brought them; and her spaniel, Master Charles, an intelligent little fellow, with long silky ears, well-feathered legs and tail, and bright, expressive eyes, simply worshipped her, and followed closely at her heels wherever she went, generally carrying her sunshade, or book, or gloves, or even a handkerchief when he could get nothing else, belonging to his beloved mistress.

CHAPTER VI.

"The bonniest lad that e'er I saw,
Sae gallant and sae gay a swain;
Through a' the lasses he did rove,
And reign'd resistless king of love."

"It lies not in our power to love or hate,
For will in us is over-ruled by fate."

A second summer were away. September came. The heavy golden shocks of wheat were filling the fields, the reapers busy, the children to be seen with their "bearings" following in the track of the great rake, their straw hats decked with poppies, and wild convolvulus; tints of red, yellow, and fiery bronze were beginning to appear amidst the green array of the trees, which were losing their summer freshness, while the noisy rooks cawed and wrangled in their topmost branches, or unweariedly stalked with extreme gravity through the gleaming, silky-like stubble, searching for living dainties.

"The westlin' winds, and slaught'ring guns,
Bring autumn's pleasant weather;
The moorcock springs on whirling wings
Among the blooming heather."

The sharp ping of the breech-loader was constantly heard, and report said that mine host of the "Three Ringers" had some ardent sportsmen staying at his quaint little magpie inn. This might be so, but the inhabitants of Holt's Farm saw nothing of them, until one afternoon, when a soft south wind wooed the brown fallen leaves, rustling them with tender touch, and blew the clouds away, leaving only a clear azure sky above, and the golden, steady sunshine making it almost warm as summer, tempted Paola out for a long walk.

Her husband had gone to Blotchley on business, and she felt anything would be preferable to sitting in the dusky parlour with only Meecess Carillon as companion, for her covert insolence roused the Spanish blood in Paola's veins, and made her feel tempted to retort sometimes in a way she knew would be unseemly. So she called Master Charles, and set out for a ramble, riotously preceded by the spaniel.

She went down by the meadows, through Blackman's Spinney, a lonesome place, with thick undergrowth, and rows of tall, dark firs,

and so on till she came to the summit of Pantons' Crag.

Absorbed in her own thoughts and the dog's gambols she had noticed little, but now as she looked down from her elevated perch she saw a faint mist drawn across the valley that lay at her feet, and, knowing what it meant, turned and retraced her steps rapidly.

Before she got very far it grew denser, and when she reached the bottom of the hill it was milk-white and opaque, its dank breath creeping upwards in wreaths of vapour like diaphanous clouds.

Without a moment's hesitation she cut off a long floating ribbon that decorated her gown, and tying it to the dog's collar uttered the one word "Home."

She knew the sagacious fellow would track his way safely by the aid of that sharp, brown nose, so she felt no fear as he trotted off, leading her, and thus reversing the usual order of things.

On they went, steadily and surely, Master Charles looking like a phantom hound in the mist.

Occasionally the bleat of a lost sheep was heard, or the lowing of a cow unable to find its way to the milking shed, or the tinkle of a cattle bell; otherwise all was silent, till on the air rang out a shout for help.

For a moment Paola stood as though turned to stone, and then remembering the dangerous bits of bogland that lay about, such fatal traps for unwary strangers, she stooped, and, patting the spaniel's head encouragingly, told him to "Seek, and."

With a sharp yelp he turned off to the right, and his mistress, stepping cautiously, followed him. Again the cry for help rang out, nearer, and when it pealed through the misty air a third time Paola knew she was not ten feet from the lost one.

"Where are you?" she cried, for the dog was going very cautiously.

"Here," answered a deep voice straight before her. "I am sunk two feet in this abominable mud, and can't get free."

"Can't you step forward?" she asked, peering ahead, and making out an instinct something.

"I don't know. I stopped because at every step I seemed to sink deeper, and did not know where I was going."

"Can you see me?"

"Faintly."

"Well, step towards me. I am standing on firm ground, and if you have a stick stretch it out, and I will give you a helping pull."

"I have only my gun."

"Is that in the mire?"

"No, I have managed to keep that free, but it is weighting me down."

"Stretch that out; it will be longer and better than a stick," she said, authoritatively.

"It is not loaded," he announced, as with an immense amount of splashing and floundering he strove to get a little nearer his rescuer, "I let both barrels off at a duck, who led me into this pretty predicament."

"Can you stretch out a little further?"

"I am afraid I shall pull you in," he said, as with a mighty plunge he got near enough to shove the stick into her hands.

"No, you won't. Now, come steadily and carefully along, and you will be safe."

The stranger obeyed her, and in a couple of minutes more stood on the firm ground at her side, Master Charles yelping and barking furiously the while.

"How can I thank you?" he questioned, as he stood by her.

"Don't try to, please," she responded.

"I must. You have saved my life."

"Not quite that," she answered, with some confusion.

"I think quite that. This is a lonely spot, and at every attempt to extricate myself I seemed to be sinking deeper into the unknown depths of that uneasy bog."

"It is rather difficult to get out without help," she acknowledged.

"I found it very difficult; in fact, impossible. I suppose people are lost occasionally when no help comes?"

"Sometimes," she admitted, reluctantly, and with a little shiver.

"And I should have been, but for your timely aid."

"I hope not. And now, which way do you want to go?" she asked, abruptly.

"I am staying at a little inn called the Three Ringers, about a mile from Bletchley."

"Yes, I know. Home, Charles," and she shook the ribbon to set him going, and said to her companion, "Keep close to me, please."

"But am I taking you out of your way? I cannot do that on such an evening as this, even to save myself from some inconvenience," he asked, eagerly.

"No. My way lies in that direction."

"You are certain? You are not saying this to help a lost stranger, and make things easy for him?"

"No, truly. I live a mile from the Three Ringers. So it is really my way home, too."

"And you trust solely to your dog to guide you?"

"Oh, yes, he is perfectly safe."

"That cunning nose of his stands him in good need on occasions of this sort."

"It does indeed."

"A most valuable and necessary companion in these misty parts."

"Yes. I seldom or never go out unless he accompanies me. I wonder you ventured on a shooting expedition without a dog."

"Well, to tell you the truth I only arrived at the Three Ringers last night, and as I did not exactly come on a sporting expedition, I brought no dog with me."

"I see. Still, I think Jim Harlowe should not have let a stranger go shooting without a guide."

"I am not exactly a stranger," he returned, with a little laugh.

"No?"

"No. I was here once, ten years ago, staying with some of my mother's relatives. She was a Northumbrian," he explained.

"I see," said Paola, again.

"In fact I have come now to see them, but I arrived too late to intrude on them last night, and to-day I heard my cousin was from home, so I thought I would go for a day's sport, and have a big bag to offer for his acceptance to-morrow."

"And instead, you got lost."

"Exactly so, thanks to the mist. Do you have them often?"

"In the autumn and spring rather frequently. It is early for them yet, and there is one good thing, they don't last long."

"That is something."

"It is lightening and lifting now."

"Yes, it seems clearer. Do you know where you are?" he questioned.

"Yes. Near Blackman's Spinney."

"What a queer name for a place."

"Yes, it is rather funny."

"I suppose there is some story that gives it that title."

"I believe so. A coloured seaman murdered a shipmate there for the sake of his prize money, and it is said he haunts the place at midnight."

"A gruesome tale. You hardly like to go through it after dusk, I should think."

"I don't mind in the least," she answered, lightly. "I am neither nervous nor superstitious."

"That is well for you."

"Yes. And I have to go through it now. That is your path, you can find your way alone as it is clearing."

"Yes," he answered, as she stopped, and the mist clearing in earnest he looked at her keenly, and she at him, and as their eyes met each felt a thrill. Something about his grey orbs and chestnut locks seemed familiar to her, while he thought he had never seen anything more lovely than her face, for the exertion had brought a rose flush to the usually

pale cheeks, which gave an added lustre to the sapphire eyes.

"Good-bye," she said.

"Good-bye," he echoed, baring his curly head in her honour. "May I not know—"

But he was speaking to the almost leafless trees, and the bracken, and the undergrowth—his late companion had glided away, with a swift, graceful motion that soon took her from the range of his sight.

Jabez had only just come in when his wife reached the farm, but he was already making preparations to go out and seek for her, and his face cleared visibly as he saw her.

"Were ye lost?" he asked, laying his heavy hand on her shoulder, with a gesture meant to be caressing.

"Not exactly lost," she answered. "Charles is too good a guide for any fear of that when he is with me."

"I was anxious, and just comin' to look for ye."

"Nought was never in danger," muttered Rachel, spitefully, as she banged a plateful of "singing hinnies" down on the table, with a force that sent the cakes flying to the four corners.

"You need never be when I have the spaniel with me."

"He's a good fellow, an' a wonderful nose for scent."

"Yes, he seemed to track the way home quite easily."

"I am glad I bought him for ye. Ye must promise me never to go out without him."

"I promise," answered his wife.

"That's right," and he stooped his grizzled head, and kissed the lips that were his by right again and again.

But when Paola was released from that embrace, the bright, girlish colour had all fled from her face, she was ashy pale, and looked older and more womanly, while the lines about her lips had deepened.

Next morning, at a somewhat early hour, Jim Harlowe's handsome guest left "The Three Ringers," and walked through the wood to Blackman's Spinney. He paused there at the exact spot where he parted from his fair guide the previous night, and then sauntered slowly up towards Holt's Farm, through the meadows, where the kine were grazing, standing knee-deep in the cool ponds, through the quaint old-world garden, with its late roses and mignonette sweetly scenting the air, to the porch. He entered *some ceremony*, neither knocking nor ringing, and made for the parlour.

He expected to find Jabez Holt there, but the farmer was not in the parlour. He only saw a tall female figure in a white gown, with deep blood-red roses at the throat and belt, standing before the wide fire-place, with down-bent head, crowned with dusky plaits, and loosely entwined fingers.

The attitude was one of despondency or deep thought, he could not tell which, and feeling he was intruding he turned to go, but struck his foot against a chair and came to a standstill on the threshold as the woman lifted her head, and he recognised his companion of yesterday.

"I—I—really beg your pardon," he faltered.

"I came to see my cousin Jabez, and walked in without ceremony, as I thought I should find him here."

"Don't go," as he turned away. "If you want to see him particularly at once I will send for him."

"It does not matter, I can come another time," returned the young man, wondering how on earth this beautiful, elegant woman came into his rough cousin's home.

"He is sure to be in at one to dinner."

"Oh, I won't intrude on you till that time. I will go to him if you will tell me where he is."

"You would not be intruding," she returned, "and I am sure you must be Claud Harley."

"I am he," he agreed, eagerly. "How do you know?"

"From the portrait of your grandmother upstairs."

"Am I so very like her?" he queried.

"The exact counterpart, as far as colouring and eyes are concerned. Your features are larger, but I should have known you directly from the likeness."

"Did you know me last night?" he demanded, coming nearer.

"The light was so uncertain I could not see you plainly. Still, your face seemed strangely familiar," she answered.

"You see my grandmother's portrait often, then?"

"Two or three times every day. It hangs in my room."

"And you are—"

"Your cousin, Jabez Holt's wife."

"Ah!"

He came nearer still, and looked at her as she spoke. He saw then the lines about her mouth, and the weary curve it had, and knew she had suffered since her marriage with Jabez—suffered as only a highly-refined, sympathetic woman can when brought into close contact with a boor, and tied to him for life. He knew not her reason for wedding him, but he saw she had paid a heavy price for any comforts he gave her.

"You did not know that he was married, possibly," she said, after a somewhat embarrassed pause.

"I did not know it. I never heard of it. I have been abroad for some years."

"That accounts for it, then."

"Yes."

"Did it never strike you he would marry?" she asked this because she knew he was the heir-at-law, and she was painfully conscious that she would share the fortune with him that might have been all his.

"Yes. I thought it was merely a question of time. I did not think, though, that he would marry you, or such a woman as you are."

"No?"

She flushed at his words, and their eyes met, his full of deep admiration, mingled with astonishment, hers cloudy with shame and constraint.

"You are not like the women the Holts generally choose for their wives."

"Neither was your grandmother."

"True. She was a Pole, and not a plebeian."

"Ah!"

It was Paola's turn to say it, and she said it feeling more keenly than ever she had before the degradation of her union with the old north country farmer.

"Do you wish to join my husband?" she said bravely, conquering her feelings. "He is in the north meadow."

"No, thanks. It is half-past twelve now. If I wait here I shall see him soon enough, without much exertion."

"Yes. But will you excuse me? I have one or two things to do."

"Household things, may I ask?"

"Not exactly household things. I have many pets among the animals"—how Claud pitied her as she spoke; her words told such an unconsciously sad story of a life cut off from human intercourse and sympathy—"whom I visit daily. I am going to see them now."

"May I come, too?" he asked, eagerly.

"Certainly, if it won't bore you."

"Bore me! There is nothing I should like better," he declared.

And together they passed out into the brilliance of the September day, and visited the ponies, and the iron-grey mare with her tiny foal, and the prize Alderney, Black Bess, and the chicks and ducklings, and a lamb who had broken its leg; and for one and all Jabez Holt's wife had a caress and a tender word, which the animals seemed to appreciate.

When they returned they found Jabez waiting for them in the parlour. He seemed half pleased and half displeased at his cousin's advent; cast one or two envious and suspicious glances at him, granted some complaints

against his long sojourn in "furrin parts," and finally asked him to stay to dinner, and told him he must bring up his "traps" from the Three Ringers, and stay at the farm for awhile.

Both of which invitations Claud accepted eagerly, for his cousin's wife charmed him as no woman had ever charmed him before, filled his whole being with a vague unrest, a great longing, as he watched her flitting to and fro, lithe and graceful, her white gown glancing like a ray of light as it swept the dusky floor; and her voice—there was a dangerous sweetness in her tones, which took shades and variations as she spoke to him during dinner of subjects that were high Dutch to the old farmer and the ill-favoured housekeeper, who glared and scowled at the two beautiful young people as though she could have killed them with pleasure by her black glances, and Claud, as he gazed at the exquisite, statuesque profile of his hostess, unknown to himself, was as much in love with her as a man possibly can be with a woman of whose existence he has only known twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER VII.

"My own bright love, whose fairest face
Of all fair womankind,
Hath found in my heart that sacred place
Another can never find."

CLAUD'S "traps" were duly brought over from the Inn, and he took up his abode at the farm, to his own intense delight, and that of Rachel Carillon, who saw breakers ahead, and much trouble in the future for Jabez, and who rejoiced accordingly, with a most unholy delight, while she narrowly watched the young couple, thus thrown into such close and perilous companionship, with keen eyes, to detect the first signs of love between them. Claud was handsome as Antinous, Jabez ugly as a vulcan; the former highly educated, clever, accomplished, fascinating, the latter ill-read, rough, uncouth, repellent. Anyone could see which way things would go, and how the woman, debarred for nearly two years from intercourse with congenial spirits, would turn and cling to this man, whom fate had thrown in her path, and who was in every way calculated to please the mind and eye, and formed such a striking contrast to the man to whom she was tied.

In truth, after Harley came to the farm, the days seemed to speed by on winged feet to Paola. The void in her life was filled, the longing of her heart satisfied in full, the dreary hours of painful monotony over.

There was always something to be done, something to be seen, something to be planned. He was a bit of a painter, and would take his easel down to the edge of the wood, or white gate leading to the spinney, and sketch the prettiest views, and sometimes he would put the pencil into her slender fingers and show her how to trace a tree or limn a vista of hills and vales. Then they visited all the points of interest in the neighbourhood together, and revisited the quagmire where they had first met, always accompanied by Master Charles, who attached himself warmly to the visitor. Then there were the evenings growing long now, full of a subtle, intangible, little understood charm to these two, when they sang together, his tenor notes blending well with her low, rich ones, and old Jabez would beat time with his fingers, as the melody filled the room, and Rachel would cast queer and sinister glances at all three from her seat in the Ingle Nook, where she usually sat with her basket of mending, and all went well and happily, for the farmer was busy, so busy that he had not much time to give rein to his usual jealous fears when he saw any man address his wife.

He had recently purchased "A sight o' beeves," some of which he meant to fatten to send up to the cattle-show, and he was so full of this that he couldn't think of anything else, and as to Meecees

Carillon, whatever she thought, she would rather have bitten out her tongue than have given utterance to one word which might have opened his eyes, and shown him the breakers and rocks ahead. No, she kept silent. Her time was coming, when she could pay back Jabez every pang he had inflicted on her with tenfold interest, jeer and jibe him, humble him to the dust. So she waited and watched, and was amiably attentive in a bearish, crass kind of way to Claud, and was strangely civil to her mistress. She was ever ready to pack the luncheon basket with dainties for them, to suggest pretty spots to visit, to make excuses to Jabez for their occasional absence from the midday meal, and generally to constitute herself their champion and protector.

"Ye ha' na' shown Master Harley the Bullen Rock yet, Meecees Holt," she said one morning as she cleared away the breakfast things, and heard them discussing what they should do and where they should go.

"It is rather a long way," returned Paola.

"A matter o' five mile."

"Quite that, and it is impossible to drive to it."

"Ye can manage ten mile there and back, and as to Master Harley he can do that and morn."

"Well, yes, Rachel, I think I am equal to that number of miles, he agreed, a slight smile curving the handsome mouth, which the tawny moustache shaded like the sweep of a bird's wing.

"Well, ye ha' better go."

"Is it worth seeing?"

"Yes, it is very curious?" acknowledged Paola.

"Then we will go. We can start at once."

"But we cannot possibly get back in time for dinner, and as I was away yesterday, Jabez will think I ought to be home to-day," she objected.

"Never ye mind that," said Rachel, eagerly. "Master's gone to see te new buildin' in te North Meadow, and I'll send him doon his dinner, and word that I'm cleanin' here. This room want's it bad, it's a world o'time since its had a real good clean," casting an eye around on the spotless furniture.

"That settles it then," cried Claud, quickly, loth to lose several hours spent alone with this woman who was becoming only too dear to him. "It would be a pity to spend such a glorious day indoors. Pack up the basket for us, Rachel, and we'll be off."

The housekeeper obeyed with alacrity, and Paola getting her hat, they started away.

"Afraid of your complexion?" he queried, laughingly, as they strolled through the garden, gay with chrysanthemums and late blooms.

"No; why?" she asked, gazing up at him with her soft, velvety eyes.

"You have such a huge hat on," looking at the broad-brimmed leghorn. "It leaves hardly any of your face visible to the public gaze."

"That does not matter."

"So you think. I may be of a different opinion."

"You can see the roses, they are much nicer to look at."

"You picked those this morning."

"Yes."

"And wear this particular hat to show them off."

"Exactly so."

"What vanity!"

"I don't see that there is any vanity in that."

"Of course not. I shall expect you to give them to me to-night. Will you?"

His voice was tremulous as he made the request, but she did not notice it, nor the passionate look in his grey eyes, for she did not know how much she was to him, nor how dearly he would prize a few flowers worn in her breast or hat.

"You can have them if you wish, but they will be rather faded."

"That does not matter."

"There are some more in the conservatory," she added, innocently.

"I know; but I would rather have those," nodding at the dead-white blooms, that decorated the leghorn.

"Very well. Is it not lovely to-day, so fresh, and yet sunny and mild?"

"Delightful, only we won't find it quite so delightful here," they were just entering the spinney. "This place always seems damp and cold, even on the hottest day."

"Yes, it is rather gruesome," and she gave a little shudder as her eyes fell on some orange fungus, streaked with deep red, as if blood had soaked into it.

"Horrible after sunset to the superstitious."

"Yes, these tall trees shut out all light, only a gleam of moonlight steals through the branches here and there, making the place look weird and ghostly."

"Not much frequented by the country folk?"

"No, especially after dark, and hardly at all in the daytime. It has a bad name."

"A good rendezvous for clandestine lovers. I am glad we are free of it," as they stepped out once more from the shadow of the dark trees, into the warmth and glow and brilliance of the October day.

"Are we far from the rock now?" he asked, after they had walked a considerable distance.

"No. Do you see that field straight ahead?"

"Yes."

"We must go through that, then down some steps in the face of the cliff, and we are there."

"What a queer place!" exclaimed Claud, as they reached the seashore and proceeded to explore the huge rock, nearly a hundred feet high, with its strange caves, and projections, worn by the washing and fretting of the restless sea.

"We had better sit down here, and admire it from a safe distance," suggested Paola, "the tide is coming up, and it will soon be surrounded."

"And there is much to admire," said the young man, as he flung himself down on the sand, that sparkled like diamond dust, at her feet, and watched the rainbow play of colours on the dancing waves, the wondrous shadows on the azure sky, the silvery mist in the caves as the advancing waters dashed against the rocks, and threw the spray high in the air, and conquetted with the stranded coils of red and bronze sea-wood, and many-hued pebbles and shells, that glowed like opals and pearls in the brilliant sunrays.

It was an enchanting scene, a perfect sea-god's retreat, bright with the treasures of the deep.

"Enchanted world! enchanted hour!"

He felt the spell of it strongly as he lay there, just where he could see the beautiful face of his companion, and drink in all its rare loveliness. He could have stayed there for hours, in a dreamy state of rapture, only Paola asking if he didn't want some luncheon roused him, and he set to work to unpack the basket.

"Rachel has improved very much since I last saw her," he observed, as he drew out the dainties. "I mean as to manner," he added, quickly. "In appearance she is just as detestable as ever."

"Yes. She is not quite so rough, and uncouth. When I first came to the farm her manner was most unbearably insolent."

"There may have been a reason for that," he remarked with a significant little laugh.

"I think there was," acknowledged Paola.

"She wanted to be Mrs. Jabez."

"Yes."

"What a disappointment for her. How could she think any man would espouse her unless he was blind?"

"She may not be aware of her shortcomings in the way of looks."

"Perhaps not, and so she made it uncomfortable for you on your arrival at the farm."

"Yes," this with a heavy sigh, and a weary droop of the red lips.

"Made things worse than they would otherwise have been."

"I think so."

"And any way, you would not have been very happy?" with a keen glance at her face.

"Not very. You see my life was a lonely one," she added, quickly, and apologetically.

"I was accustomed before I came here to such a large family that it made a great difference."

"And latterly it has been better?"

"Oh, yes, since you came I have been perfectly happy, perfectly content." She accompanied this innocent confession with an unconsciously tender look at him, which set him thinking deeply. It had been dawning on him for some time that he cared more for his cousin's wife than he ought, that she held a place in his heart another could never find there; but he had hoped, thought he was to suffer alone, he had not dreamt of the danger to her, dreamed that she would love him also. Now that he knew her happiness was in danger, he felt honour demanded that he should go, pass out of her life as quietly and quickly as he could, leaving her to forget him if that were possible, and return to her allegiance to Jabez.

But could he do it? Would he have the strength to wrench himself free from the spell she had all unwittingly cast over him? to go away and never look on the fair, faultless face again? He hardly knew as he walked back silently at her side through the fallen autumnal leaves, that carpeted the ground thickly with russet and brown and gold. Yet he must try one week more of happiness, of mad, foolish, even wicked happiness, and then—then he would turn his back on Holt's farm and Jabez' wife for ever and ay.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Through paths unknown
Thy soul hath flown,
To seek the realms of woe.
Where fiery pain
Shall purge the stain
Of actions done below."

THE week passed, and still Claud lingered, sunning himself in the smiles and presence of the woman he loved "not wisely but too well." He found it harder than he had thought to go away and leave her, with the knowledge that never again might he look on her sweet, pale face, never hear the music of her voice.

October gave place to November. The days grew shorter, the veil of mist that lay over the valleys lifted only for an hour or two, and towards evening grew dense and dark. Claud often went out shooting, making that the excuse for absenting himself from the farm at that time of the day when he knew Paola would be alone, for he hardly dared trust himself in her presence unless others were by; he feared some of the love that surged in his heart so madly would rise to his lips and betray him.

He seldom went alone though. Master Charles, by his mistress's wish, accompanied him, and brought him safely home through the fogs, over bog land and quagmire.

One evening when the mists had been more than usually dense and misleading, on his arrival at the farm, he found Paola waiting for him at the porch, straining her eyes in the gathering gloom to catch the first glimpse of him.

The hall behind her was full of a warm, cheerful glow, and a half suggestion of good things preparing for the evening meal floated out on the air.

"Ah! You are safe," she cried, as he appeared, with an accent of intense relief.

"Yes. Did you think I was lost?"

"You are later than usual."

"Ten minutes," looking at the sentry-box clock, as he deposited his gun in a corner of the parlour.

"Only that! It seemed an age to me."

"Ah!"

Claud only gave utterance to that one word, but he felt that the time had come when he no longer dare dally, and must go, and the thought kept him strangely silent at tea, and drew down on his head a string of coarse chaff from Jabez as to his want of success in the field.

He answered the gibes at random, for he knew it would be a hard task to tell Paola that he must go, and he was afraid to tell her before the others, lest she might betray the true state of her feelings in the suddenness of her disappointment.

Fortune favoured him though. After the meal was over the farmer went to see one of the "beeves" that was sick, and Rachel to superintend some work in the kitchen, and he was left alone with his hostess.

She stood in the ingle nook, the ruddy glow of the fire bathing her in its radiance, making the jet beads on her gauzy black gown sparkle and glint. The unrelieved blackness of her toilet suited her, and enhanced the pale purity of her complexion, and the man standing at her side felt every moment that he was growing more in love with this woman with the sapphire eyes and dusky braids.

"Paola," he said, at last, and even to his own ears his voice sounded strange and harsh, "My holiday in the 'North Countree,' is nearly at an end."

"What do you mean?" she asked, quickly, lifting her eyes to his.

"I mean that I am going away."

"Claud!" She put out her hand, and into the blue orbs came such a look of anguished pain that his heart smote him bitterly.

"Business—urgent," he muttered, not knowing what to say, for her lips even were white. "I must go."

"You—cannot—mean it. Cannot be so cruel—as to—leave me?"

"I must," he reiterated, firmly.

"I cannot let you go!" she cried, despairingly, turning suddenly round and clasping her hands on his arm, and as she moved her thin dress swept the bars and was alight in an instant.

She was unconscious of it; he saw it, and with a startled exclamation stooped, and catching the flaming skirt, crushed it out after a short, sharp struggle with his hands.

For an instant they stood looking at each other, held apart by some unknown influence, then as she noted his scorched, blackened hands, she seized them and pressed her lips to them, and at the touch of her mouth, he lost his self-control, and flinging his arms about her held her close to his breast, while he rained down kisses on her ashy face, with half-cruel, despairing passion again and again.

"My darling! my love! Look up! speak to me!" he implored, for her head lay heavily on his bosom when he lifted his lips from hers, and she seemed almost lifeless. "Look up, darling! You are not hurt?"

But no answer came to his pleadings, and he laid her gently in a chair, and knelt before her, chafing the cold, listless hands, and covering them with kisses.

"Paola," he whispered, as the eyelids fluttered and unclosed, "are you better? You startled me terribly."

"Yes, I am better!" she answered, wearily, and then cried, "Oh, Claud!" and, leaning forward, rested her head on his shoulder.

"My darling! can you ever forgive me?" he murmured. "What have I done! what have I done! ruined your existence?"

"Nay, not that!" she interrupted, lifting one hand to smooth his curly locks tenderly and softly.

"I should never have spoken, never have uttered one word of the love I felt! I have done you a great wrong."

"Nay, no wrong; or if any I forgive you!" she answered, looking into his eyes with a light in hers that fairly dazzled him. "I love you better than my own soul, than any hope

of the present or future! Do not be sorry for your words, which have given me a glimpse of your heart, your true feelings towards me!"

"I cannot be sorry if you are not," he returned, fondly, again drawing her to his breast; "only there is your future. You might have been happy but for me."

"Happy but for you!" she exclaimed, with passionate fervour. "Why, it is you who have given me the only happiness I have ever known! Think of the blank dreariness of my life before you came, and the full, rich joy of it since! I can face any future now, with the memory of those sweet days to console me. Nothing can rob me of that!"

"My dear one! how much you care for me!" he said, remorsefully, gazing at the pale, lovely face on his breast.

"You have my whole heart!" she answered, simply.

"And I do not deserve it. I have treated you shamefully! Oh! if I could only undo the mischief I have wrought!" and the hands that held hers so closely shook as though he had the ague.

"I would not have it otherwise," she murmured, softly, "now—now that I know you care for me!"

"Care for you! My soul, my life, are wrapped up in you! My darling! my sweet! how shall I exist without you? How go back to the old way of living?"

"And—we must part?"

Her voice was full of tears as she put the question.

"Alas! yes! Honour leaves me no other course. I must go away and leave you. Try to redeem my character in your eyes, for I feel you must despise me."

"Despise you, Claud!" She lifted her head, and looked at him again; then, with a little movement of unutterable love and confidence, twined her hands round his. "Why, I worship you! If there is any fault it is mine, not yours. I have been unguarded, unwomanly, you all that is noble and true!"

"Oh, Paola! how your words stab me!" he cried, in anguish. "I feel so unworthy, so utterly base! No man ever treated a woman worse than I have treated you. What misery I have laid up in the future for you! what sorrow! what unavailing regret!"

"I forgive all that!" she interrupted. "The joy has outweighed the pain. It is better to have lived and loved than never to have loved at all! I feel that I would not for years, centuries of misery, forego the knowledge that you love me even as I love you!"

she went on, passionately. "In my dreams it will all come to me again! I shall feel your kisses on my lips, your breath on my brow, your arms around me, and your voice whispering in my ears! Would I lose that, think you, for anything else on earth?"

"My own!" he murmured, again kissing the red mouth temptingly near his own.

"And now I must leave you," he said, after a long pause, full of a silent, if sad bliss to both.

"Stay a little longer," she prayed, raising her passionate entreating eyes to his.

"I cannot, dearest. I must think of your future."

"And—and—shall we never meet again?" in faltering accents.

"Once more—at breakfast to-morrow. I must avoid exciting the suspicions of others. Then we part for ever in this world."

He rose from his kneeling posture as he spoke, and stood before her, the grand grey eyes full of passion, remorse, and regret.

"Claud, you break my heart," she moaned.

"If I were only free!"

"What can I do, my dear one?" he questioned, hopelessly. "You are not free."

"Stay with me!"

And she clung to him convulsively, with faint, broken entreaties, which pained the man who loved her deeply, but could not deter him from his purpose.

"Good-bye," he murmured, loosing the

clinging hands; and without another look he left her.

She remained standing before the fire, her face rigid and ashen white, her eyes dilated, her hands hanging listlessly by her side; and so Jabez found her an hour later when he came in from the yard.

"What ails thee, lass?" he queried, anxiously.

But she could not answer, only raised her hand to her throat as if she were choking.

"Ha' ye been startled by the burnin' o' ye gown?" he questioned next, as his eyes fell on the charred skirts.

She nodded an assent.

"Ye're not hurt?" with painful eagerness.

She shook her head; speech was impossible.

"Then ye'd better get to bed, dearie. Ye'd be better there."

Paola did not need a second bidding. Mechanically she crept out of the room, and felt her way upstairs like one blind and dazed.

"Your mistress looks very ill. Was she much startled at her gown gettin' alight?" asked Jabez, when he was alone with Rachel.

"I dinna think it's the gown bain' burnt as is the matter wi' her," returned the housekeeper, who had been eavesdropping, and knew what had passed between the ill-starred lovers.

"What is it, then?" he demanded, sharply, for something in the woman's tone and manner struck him as curious.

"Ye should ask yoursel' that, and perhaps ye'd ken."

"What do you mean?" he cried, angrily.

"I mean," she returned, with a fiendish smile, "that if I were an old man wi' a young binny o' a wife that I wouldna' ask bonny laddies to stay at my hame, and then leave them alone to bill and coo as they pleased."

"De ye mean to say my wife has been love-making with Master Harley?" he queried, furiously.

"I say nathin'," she replied, sententiously.

"Silence is golden. Keep yer ain eyes open and judge for yoursel'."

And she departed, leaving Jabez in a state of rage and jealousy that defies description.

He could hardly contain his wrath till morning, and opened out at the object of it the moment he entered the parlour.

Paola, pale and silent, was in her usual place behind the tea-urn, and Rachel was buttering hob cakes and furtively watching the others.

"Are ye thinkin' o' leavin' soon, Master Harley?" inquired Jabez, grimly, of his guest.

"Why? Yes," answered Claud, looking at him in surprise. "I'm going to-day."

"That's right," returned his host; "an' its well ye intend to go."

"Why?"

"Because if ye had na' gone to-day I should ha' turned ye out neck and crop."

"Jabez!" exclaimed the young man.

"Ah! ye may Jabez me, but I'll keep my wife to myself, an' go shares in her with nobody."

"You forget yourself in speaking in such a way before her," said Claud, sternly.

"No, I don't. 'Tis ye ha' done that, mistakin' other people's property for yer own, 'an treatin' it as such, ye scoundrel!"

"Jabez!" implored Paola, faintly.

"An' wha' ha' ye got to say, ma'am?" facing her furiously.

"He is our guest," she murmured.

"An' are ye not ashamed to speak up for ye're lover, ye shameless hussy!"

And then followed a torrent of abuse, and such coarse language as the shrinking woman's ears had never listened to before, and which filled her with unspeakable horror.

"You ruffian," said Claud, with supreme contempt, "to use such language to any woman, much less your wife."

"I daresay ye wish she was yours?" sneered the farmer.

"I do," returned Harley, coolly. "I could

appreciate her as you never can, or will, for she is far above you."

"An' you wish she was free, doubtless?"

"I do. I would marry her at once if she were."

"An' de ye think I'm going to listen to this kind o' talk in my own house?" with an awful oath. "Get out, or I'll do ye some damage," and the horny hand closed ominously over a knife.

"I have no wish to stay since it is your house," and, with one look full of pity and concern at Paola, Claud turned away, and went out into the misty November day.

Life for Paola was hard, indeed, in the days that followed. Her husband never addressed her without prefixing a horrible oath to his speech. Meecoss Carillon was insolent, overbearing, and triumphant; her mind was full of doubt and perplexity; and, to crown all, she was kept a sort of prisoner, and her actions somewhat closely watched.

She had received a line from Claud the day he left, brought by one of the dairymaids, who loved her mistress as much as she hated the housekeeper, asking her to meet him in Blackman's Spinney any evening she could get out, and saying he would be there from eight to nine every night till he saw her.

Five nights went by, and she could not manage to slip out from her prison. On the sixth, as she sat by the ingle-nook, watching the leaping flames with saddened eyes, she heard the noise of loud voices in altercation, and Rachel went to investigate the matter.

It appeared Peter Royle, now an absolute beggar, had come to the farm to ask a little charity from the man who had helped to ruin him; and Jabez, sullen and still smarting under the sense of his wrongs, had refused him in brutal and infuriating terms even a meal or a tankard of ale.

Holt passed out to his well-stocked yard after throwing the last cutting gibe at the unfortunate man; but Royle, well-nigh starved, lingered on the threshold, and Rachel, sending the maids about their business, took upon herself to invite him into the kitchen, and gave him a plentiful meal of cold meat, and plied him well with ale and fiery whiskey, finally winding up her good acts by presenting him with a packet of letters, old and yellow with age, which he read; and while he read the expression of his face changed from that of a human being to that of a ferocious, wild animal thirsting for blood, and the expression was still there when he left the farm, and wandered away, no one knew where.

Meantime Paola, finding herself free from espionage, had slipped out, and was speeding down through the meadows to Blackman's Spinney as fast as her feet could carry her, regardless of the chill November air, which ruffled her tresses, and played hide-and-seek with her gown.

It was a clear night for the time of year, and the moon was up, round and full. In the Spinney its light only fell here and there in chequered, silvery patches, but it was enough to show the panting woman the figure of her lover leaning against a tree. He had evidently been out shooting, for his gun leant beside him.

"My darling!" he exclaimed, opening his arms, and clasping the slender form in them as she approached, "you managed to get out at last, then?"

"Yes," she murmured, wearily, laying her head on his breast.

"And—has he been very cruel to you?"

"Horrible!" she returned, with an involuntary shudder.

"The brute! I could kill him,"—the young man's hands clenched convulsively as he spoke, and his brow darkened—"and I can't save you?"

"No; I must face my fate."

"How I blame myself, and how you will curse the day on which you first saw me!"

"Nay," she answered, gently, "how I shall bless it."

"You love me so much, sweet?" he questioned fondly.

"So very much that I would not have it otherwise."

"If you were only free," he groaned, "how happy we might be together!"

"Ah, we must not think of that," she said, quickly, "it will unnerve us for facing our hard future," and then she commenced to sob convulsively, while her whole frame shook, for the sobs were born of utter despair.

"My own, do not grieve so," he said, tenderly, drawing his handkerchief out and wiping away the fast-falling tears. "It pains me inexpressibly, and I am so helpless I cannot aid you."

"No. No one can help me."

"How hard it seems that you must go back to that ruffian who will ill-use you now, and leave me who idolise you."

"It is hard; still I look on it as a punishment for the sin I have committed. I, another man's wife, had no right to love you. I struggled against it, but my passion for you conquered, and now I pay the penalty," and she burst into a fresh flood of tears.

"Don't, don't!" he implored, and dropping the handkerchief he drew her closer to him, and kissed away the tears with his burning lips.

"What was that?" asked Paola, fearfully. "Something seemed to stir in the undergrowth."

"A rabbit, probably."

"No, it was more than that; I heard breathing. I must go back, Claud. If he misses me he will come out and kill us both," with an irrepressible shudder.

"Must you go so soon?"

"I dare not stay longer. Good-bye."

"You will write to me sometimes?" he pleaded.

"No," she answered, firmly; "we must not even have that consolation."

"Oh, Heaven! how shall I bear my life?" groaned the man.

"Try to be happy for my sake, Claud," she whispered; and with one long, clinging kiss she escaped from his arms and sped away up to the house—a dark, shadowy form.

She found the parlour untenanted, and with a sigh of relief sank into the chair before the ingle-hook, and gave herself up to her sad and despairing thoughts.

She never knew how long she sat there; it might have been ten minutes, it might have been an hour. She had hardly noticed the entrance of the housekeeper, who sat down opposite, and occupied herself with some needlework, when the faint report of a gun was heard.

"Did you hear that?" she questioned, in alarm, a strange sensation of fear at her heart.

"Poachers," returned Rachel, laconically. "I don't think so," and she rose and drew the curtains aside, but could see nothing.

Half-an-hour later there was the sound of swift, running feet, and a man's voice was heard calling loudly for "Meecess Carillon."

The woman rose at the first sound and went out, a strange look on her pallid face, and Paola heard the man say in hoarse tones,—

"Your wanted down at the Spinney, Meecess."

"For what?"

"Master's shot and done for."

"You're a fule, Benji Craig."

"I see no fule; to master's lyin' in te Spinney, shot in te head, and Haman's watchin' him while I came on fur lights and things."

"Ah!"

The woman's voice sounded strange and faint. Then there was a clatter and noise of many tongues, and through it all Paola stood as if turned to stone, till silence reigned once more around; and then, with a sudden start she flew out down the meadows to the place where so lately she had met her lover; and there, by the light of the lanterns held by the farm-servants, she saw her husband lying face downwards amid the tawny fungus, that was taking deeper hues from the crim-

son stream that welled from an ugly hole in his head, and in his tightly-clenched right hand was a white cambric handkerchief.

CHAPTER IX.

"All my heart weeps with the branches,
Wails with the wail of the boughs;
Only a low singing stanzas
Flow of real tears, and endows
Heart with a strength for new vows."

An inquest was held next day at the "Three Ringers." Old Jabez Holt's body, grimmer and more unlovely in death than in life, was stretched on the table, and near it the cambric handkerchief and a breech-loading rifle, of most expensive and finished make.

The evidence was not very conclusive at first or interesting. Benji Craig was sworn, and stated that returning home from Bletchley with Haman, a fellow-servant, the night before, being a little late they took a short cut, which would lead them through the Spinney, when at some distance from it they heard the report of a gun, and thinking the poachers were abroad took little notice of it, but going through the Spinney they found their master lying there shot through the head. Haman's evidence was similar.

Then the entrance of Mrs. Holt caused a diversion. Everyone stared pitilessly at the widow of the murdered man. She looked ghostly—her lips even were white, and her face was all haggard and drawn, as though from severe mental agony.

Her evidence did not amount to much, and she gave it reluctantly. She had not seen her husband since seven o'clock the night before—was sitting in the parlour with the housekeeper when she heard the report of a gun. Thought it was poachers. Did not know of her husband having an enemy, or of any one likely to take his life. Was on fairly good terms with him. At this stage she trembled so, and seemed so much overcome, that the coroner allowed her to stand down, and the doctor's evidence was taken.

He certified that the wound could not possibly have been self-inflicted, though he was of opinion that the murderer had been within a few feet of his victim when he shot him down.

Then came Rachel Carillon, and there was no hesitation about her. She told what she had to tell in her hard, metallic tones. She heard the shot, but did not go out to inquire the cause of it, as poachers were common in the neighbourhood. Went when the servants came for her. Saw master lying amid the undergrowth with the handkerchief in his hand. Did she know to whom it belonged? Yes, she knew. Was it one of her master's? No. Whose then? It belonged to Mr. Harley, the master's cousin, and there was "O. H." in the corner. This announcement caused a great sensation among the jurors, and made a man who stood in a dark corner, with hat slouched over his brows, shrink further into the shade. Did she know the gun? Yes, she had seen it often. Mr. Harley had it at the farm when he was staying there, and used to take it out shooting nearly every day. This caused a further sensation. Was Mr. Harley staying at the farm still? No, he left about a week back. Was he on good terms with every one at the farm? Well, no. He and the master had had some words the day he left. About what? About Mrs. Holt. And then she went on with cool deliberation to give her damning evidence, to the effect that she had heard him say he wished her mistress was free, and that he would marry her if she were.

She was robbed of half her satisfaction over this statement, for Paola had been taken home in an almost fainting condition, and the man with the slouched hat at this point crept quietly away. She had not much more to tell, and there was little hesitation as to the verdict. After the coroner's summing-up it was returned immediately.

It was a verdict of "Willful Murder against Claud Harley."

Then the crowd melted away from the "Three Ringers," except at the bar, where groups of two or three stood together discussing the event of the previous night.

Next morning a man and woman stood in the old parlour at the farm. They were both deadly pale, and the woman's eyes were full of an agonised fear.

"I can bear it all if you believe me innocent," he said.

"I do," she answered, meeting his glance bravely. "I know you did not do this foul deed."

"Thanks," he murmured, stretching out his hands and taking hers. "You will always think the same?"

"Always," she replied.

"My own darling!" and then he took her in his arms, pressed a lingering kiss on her brow, and turning went out and gave himself up to the two police officers who had come to arrest him in the name of the Queen, and who conducted him over to Bletchley Prison without delay.

Words cannot paint the anguish Paola felt as she saw the man she loved so tenderly taken off to prison, accused of the horrible crime of shooting her husband.

Knowing that circumstances looked fearfully black against him, and being well aware that he would and could give no explanation of how he had spent that fatal evening for fear of compromising her.

She would have spoken could she have done any good, but she was powerless. Anything she could say was bound to make matters worse, for she had left Claud in the Spinney a short time before Jabez was shot.

A horrible mystery hung over the affair. No one as far as she knew bore Jabez a grudge. There was no motive for the crime, still she never doubted Claud's innocence, and exerted herself to do the best she could to save him; secured a good lawyer, and spared neither time nor expense. In truth, she was glad to have her days fully occupied, for the nights were lonely and drear enough.

She would sit by the ingle-nook, thinking sadly of the happy, bygone days, and listening to the mournful sighing of the winter wind.

One night, as she sat there, about a fortnight after the inquest, one of the maids came to tell her a man wanted to see her on urgent business.

"What is it?" she asked, as she went out into the hall.

"Peter Royle, Meecess Holt, have sent me to ask if ye will coome and see him," explained the stranger.

"Peter Royle!" she exclaimed, in astonishment. "What can he want with me?"

"He's mortal bad; fallen over the cliffs and well-nigh smashed hisself in pieces. He say he has 'somethin' to tell ye, somethin' as ye 'ot to know about te murder," lowering her voice.

"I will go with you," said Paola at once, a wild hope leaping up in her heart, and telling one of the maids to fetch her wraps, and some for herself, as she would want her to accompany her, she was soon ready, and the three set out together.

It was a wild night, and they had far to go, for it appeared Royle, in a fit of drunkenness, had fallen over the cliffs near the Bullen Rock, and that he lay at a little inn built partly in the rock on the sea shore.

After a weary tramp they arrived at their destination, and without a moment's rest Paola proceeded to the room where the dying man lay.

He was propped up by pillows, and presented, with his battered face and bandaged, blood-stained head, a ghastly appearance. A doctor sat beside him, and in the farthest corner of the room a man was seated with a little table before him covered with papers, and a pen in his hand.

"Ah! I'm glad ye've coome," said Royle, faintly, as she entered.

"I am sorry to see you in such a state," she said, compassionately.

"Don't be," he rejoined, quickly, "for my death 'll be life to another. Ye'll shrink from me," he went on, after a pause, "when I tell ye the truth, but I must tell it. I'm goin' to die; there isn't much life in me now, an' I'll clear another. 'Twas I shot ye're husband."

"You?" she exclaimed, in amazement.

"Yes, I. This hand did it," feebly stirring the bandaged fingers.

"But—but what grudge had you against him?"

"About the bitterest one man can have against another! He seduced and ruined my sister seven-and-twenty years ago."

"Jabez!"

"Ay, ye may well exclaim Jabez! Who'd ha' thought it? Certainly I didn't all these years, an' I never should ha' known it, only Meecoss Carillon she had some spite agin him, an' that night I came begging to the farm, an' he refused me even a crust of bread; she plied me with liquor, an' then when I was half mad with drink an' rage agin him, she give me to letters she'd found in his desk, an' I read them an' see it was Jabez ruined Janet. They were pitiful enough to ha' moved a stone to compassion, but they hadn't moved him; an' as I thought o' her wrongs, an' read how she begged him to provide for her, to show pity and charity to it, neither o' which he did, I grew mad, an' swore I'd kill him."

"Then that jade whispered me that he'd gone down to the Spinney, an' I rushed down there, an' saw ye meet Master Harley, saw ye part, saw ye go one way, an' he rush wildly to other, an' then I took his gun that he forgot, an' stood waitin' for the man who had ruined my life an' Janet's."

"He came before long, an' picked up the handkerchief Master Harley dropped, an' then I stood out an' faced him, tellin' him what I knew, an' he turned an' cursed me, an' I shot him; so he died with a curse on his lips, an' I fled away, knowing I was safe; an' I should na' ha' spoken, for life is dear, only to-night I'd had more'n was good for me, an' mistook to way, an' fell over to cliffs."

"But I don't regret wha' I ha' done," he went on, a malignant expression overspreading his pallid face. "He killed her an' her child, to double murderer, and deserved to death he met."

Mrs. Holt felt a tide of conflicting emotions sweep over her as the wretched creature stopped speaking.

She did not attempt to reason with him, for she saw, ere many minutes passed by, that he would be beyond the reach of human praise or human blame, would stand face to face with the greatest of all judges, and a mighty consciousness of relief was on her.

"You are a police officer, I suppose?" she said, addressing the man at the little table, who had been diligently writing while Royle confessed.

"Yes, madam," he assented, with a polite bow.

"Can you tell me, will this confession secure Mr. Harley's release?"

"Undoubtedly it will, madam."

"Before long?"

"In the course of a few days."

"Thank you."

She turned away with a lightened heart, and, without directing one glance at the ghastly occupant of the bed, left the room, and, with the guide and her maid, retraced her steps to the farm, where she found everyone in a state of commotion and horror; for Rachel Carillon, finding the game was up, and knowing that Royle would tell of her share in the crime of Blackman's Spinney, had taken poison, and her twisted, distorted body lay on the threshold of the old parlour—a gruesome sight, and one which Paola did not forget for many a long day, and which gave her a horror of the room, and of the queer north-country house.

A year or so later the summer sun shone down on a group seated on the lawn of a pretty, picturesque house in lovely Devon.

The group was composed of Mr. and Mrs. Harley, Mr. Munro and his better-half, and two or three of their children.

An air of content and happiness was visible on all the faces, but especially on Paola's.

"And you never quarrel?" Mrs. Munro was saying.

"Oh, never! Claud's will is mine."

"Lucky man!" laughed Solicitor Mark.

"And never disagree?" continued the inquisitive lady.

"And never disagree. We are of one mind in everything, and love each other too much to quarrel."

"Love does not always keep people from quarrelling."

"True love does, I think," said Claud, "and ours is very true, and pure, for it has been tried in a fiery furnace."

"And purged of all selfishness!" murmured Paola.

"Your past trials make you better able to appreciate your present happiness," observed the lawyer.

"Perhaps," assented Harley. "At any rate, I am perfectly happy, and perfectly content."

"And so am I!" and a look of supreme content, and intense devotion shone on the beautiful face of the woman who had once been Jabez Holt's Wife.

[THE END.]

THE WRONG LETTER.

PRETTY little Hope Sterling had two lovers—a very delightful condition of affairs, but a state of things which made Hope a great deal of trouble. And as for the men, they rendered each other, as well as the girl of their hearts, very miserable. So it wasn't so nice, after all.

It had been years since Hope had been assigned by her friends to Bevan Berkeley, and she expected to marry him, for Hope was of a gentle, yielding nature; but her stepfather's son, whom she had never seen, Charlie Caverley, came to quiet Gemtown, and fell so straightway and unmistakably in love with Hope as to alter greatly the situation; for Hope *did* give him encouragement.

He took her to the picnic in his new trap, and she danced with him a great many times on the night of her birthday-party. To be sure, Bevan Berkeley was out of town, and Charlie Caverley was a family connection, and all the Sterlings were bound to show him hospitality.

He was a great favourite with his father, who had married Hope's mother when the former was a little child; had given her his name, and, in fact, she remembered no other father.

Charlie was prepared to like "little Hope;" but when he saw the girl's winsome face and golden head, there was such an unconditional surrender of the heart of this hitherto-invincible young man, that gossip little Gemtown opened its eyes in delighted wonder as to "what would happen next."

What happened next was a terrible tempest.

A party of young people had gone up on Eagle Hill, which overlooked the harbour, to see the great man-of-war, *Hercules*, come in, and Hope had taken Charlie's arm, and laughingly climbed the hill with the best of them, though such a little thing. And being everybody's pet, it was universally agreed that she should have the first look through the big telescope which had been conveyed thither.

It was a bright, magical sight; the white-capped, crisp dancing waves; the long, gleaming decks; the small, active, thronging figures of the seamen; that and the splendid air was worth climbing the ascent for, they all agreed.

And then this impromptu basket-party spread their lunch upon a rock among the crisp, grey moss, and discussed cold chicken

and Italian cream up among the clouds as securely as if sunshine and safety lasted for ever.

Charlie Caverley had gone half-way down the mountain with his gun, and was banging away at the flying birds, when a sudden gust of cold air, and the darkening of the sun, reminded him that he had foretold a storm at sunrise.

He was not used to the locality, and was all unprepared for the suddenness with which the weather changed.

A mist spread over the landscape, the air grew humid, there was a distant growl of thunder, and the next moment a close flash of lightning.

It was followed by more vivid ones. Shouldering his gun, he turned to retrace his steps.

He had ascended a few rods, when he heard the distant voices of the descending party. Something in their tone—a cry of alarm or entreaty—made him hasten his footsteps, when, suddenly, round a curve of a rock, came the flying figure of a girl.

It was Hope, who, born with a terror of lightning, was running at full speed down the mountain, her hat hanging by its blue ribbon down her back, her sweet eyes wide with fright, her gold hair blown over her face, a wild-rose colour in the dimpled cheeks stung by the sharp, salt air.

So headlong was her speed, he involuntarily stepped from the narrow path into the tall shrubbery, lest an interruption should cause her to stumble, and she passed in the rain, not seeing him. Then hearing his call, she turned her head, not staying her flight; her foot caught in the root of a tree, and she fell prostrate.

Charlie sprang and caught Hope up. He retreated with her under the shelter of an overhanging rock, as the rain came down in torrents, while the thunder and lightning pealed and played incessantly.

Hope lay quite senseless in his arms. The drenched and frightened party rushed by him like a meteor, and he made no attempt to delay them.

He could hardly trust his head to keep his feet in the din and blinding light.

Yet, through it all, he could feel Hope's heart beating faintly against his breast.

"Poor little darling!" he murmured, seeing that she was quite senseless, like one asleep.

She remained so until the storm began to abate.

Then, placing her in a sitting position in a cleft of rock, and growing anxious, he began wetting her forehead with raindrops, and rubbing her hands.

She caught her breath at last, and uttered a choking little cry.

"Hope, wake up! The storm is almost over. Hope, don't you know where you are? shaking her a little."

She opened her eyes, and then slipped her feet, shaking and clinging to him.

Her broken and incoherent exclamations gave him some insight into the peculiarity which all her other friends were aware of—her terror of lightning—and the loveliness of the white cheeks, and the appealing sweetness of the tearful eyes, made the task of reassuring her not distasteful. Indeed, before he knew it, he had kissed the pretty lips, and brought the burning blushes to the young face.

"Hope—dear little Hope—I couldn't help it. You see I love you so. Tell me that you don't care for that other fellow!"

At that moment there was a hurried step, and "that other fellow" stood before them!

To say that Mr. Bevan Berkeley was astonished is but feebly to state the case. He stood looking at his sweetheart in the arms of another man in simply round-eyed wonder.

He had been absent from Gemtown for the last three weeks, and though he had been introduced to Charlie Caverley before his departure, he had never dreamed of him as a

rival—or of anybody else, for that matter. For two years he had considered Hope securely his.

He was certainly rather a commonplace fellow compared to lithe, graceful Charlie Caverley, with his coal-black hair and handsome hazel eyes. His hair and beard were straw-coloured, and his eyes a light opaque-blue. He was clumsy and countrified, yet, nevertheless, a very good fellow—better educated and brighter than he seemed.

He had a nice farm and handsome country-house to make Hope mistress of, and—there could be no doubt of that—he honestly loved her.

"I—I came for you, Hope," he said, in a rather smothered voice. "They said you were up the mountain, and the storm—"

The poor fellow's voice faltered and broke. Hope had hastily disengaged herself, breathless and frightened.

"When—when did you come home, Bevan?" she asked, instinctively trying to avoid a scene.

But she was not quite successful, since Charlie Caverley still kept possession of her hand, and, though evidently a little startled, looked from her to Berkeley unflinchingly.

The painful silence that followed was broken by his voice.

"It may as well come out now as any time. You and I can hardly pretend to be friends since we are rivals, Mr. Berkeley."

"No, returned the other, in the same smothered voice, moving uneasily and not looking at Hope, who, not having the least idea what she ought to do under such circumstances, began to cry.

"You understand that I love Miss Sterling—the same as you do, I suppose—and she must choose between us now," went on Charlie.

"I—oh! I—I can't now!" sobbed Hope, confessing more than it was pleasant for one of her hearers to hear, since her words implied that a choice was not only possible but imminent. "It's not storming now, and I must go home."

And, gathering her skirts from her little feet, she literally ran away.

Bevan Berkeley followed, stolidly. Whatever his feelings were, he gave no utterance to them.

As for Charlie Caverley, he continued wandering about in the wet grass, banging absently at the birds, until, with soaked boots and an empty stomach, he bethought him to return home to rest and dine like an ordinary being.

Of one thing he was sure—he would have Hope. He could make her love him if she didn't; and he knew well enough that she did, or she wouldn't have spoken so. Of course, everybody would oppose it, but he felt in a spirit to arm himself against the world.

The next thing was that Hope whisked herself out of sight of her two admirers to spend a fortnight with her Aunt Sabra, in the next town—in fact, was gone when Charlie arrived at his late dinner.

He did not know what interview she might have had with Bevan Berkeley, but this was a very unsatisfactory parting for him. He was really not much afraid of "that other fellow"—not as much so as he would have been had he known Bevan Berkeley.

A week passed. At the end of that time Hope Sterling was in receipt of two letters—one from Charlie, one from Bevan Berkeley. With sorrow and misgivings, she pondered over these letters; but Hope was sincerity itself, and at length wrote as follows to Charlie,—

"DEAR FRIEND,—I have not written before, because it was so hard for me to decide what was right; but I am sure I love you, and that I ought to tell you the truth. I am not to blame for any circumstances. When I entered into my engagement I did not feel as I do now; but I was too young, perhaps, to know how dearly I could love. Do not think me coquetish; whatever my faults may be, I am not

that; and to-day I have many sorrowful thoughts over what has passed. I do not know what to do under these circumstances. I wish I could talk with you. Please write me again, and believe me truly yours,

"HOPE."

Then she wrote to Bevan Berkeley:—

"DEAR FRIEND,—I am sorry for what has passed; but you had better know the truth—that I do not love you as I ought if I should marry you. It would be dreadful to marry any one and know that you could love another better; and it would be wrong. I will try to see you as soon as I come home, and have a long talk with you, but I dread it very much. Please do not write any more, because it troubles me so to think about it; and I shall see you soon.

"HOPE."

Poor little Hope's hand shook so as she folded the sheets that she let the portfolio upon which they lay fall to the floor. She picked them hurriedly, placed them as quickly as possible in envelopes, superscribed, and sent them to the post-office.

She was miserable and fearful lest her aunt should know the trouble; for Bevan Berkeley was a favourite with Aunt Sabra—she would know all the truth if she suspected anything, and Hope was not in the state for further confessions. It seemed to her that she should be miserable everywhere; but in three days she started for home.

It was but a short drive in the mail coach between Owl Lake and Gemtown, but it seemed a strange journey to Hope. Her first cloud of care made her face prettily pensive. But hope thought very little of herself—only of others to whom she must give pain.

At length she reached home.

The garden was full of people—a lawn party—and her mother hurried her to her room; and Hope came down from her chambers, at last, in a lovely silk costume. The girl had lost flesh and colour, but had never looked sweeter.

And there was Charlie Caverley. He was going to-and-fro with camp-chairs and cups of tea for the ladies. He would come to her side soon; but he passed, at last, with only a pale, constrained look, and barely a civil word. The next moment Bevan Berkeley took the chair at her side.

"I thought you would come home to-day, Hope."

One glance at his cheerful face bewildered her. Bevan bent towards her, and affecting to look at her bracelet, whispered,—

"I received your letter."

Hope bent her head silently in response. The silvery chat and the music around her seemed to make her head reel. How strangely she felt! The glance from Charlie had chilled her heart. Her eyes dwelt in bewilderment on Bevan's flushed face. He looked actually happy.

"Bevan," called Mrs. Sterling, "will you go to the house and ask Dolly for my shawl?"

When Bevan Berkeley had gone away Hope rose, and, walking down the lawn, stood looking in a rather forlorn way at the tennis-players—really not seeing them at all. Suddenly there was a voice at her side.

"I think, Hope, you might have spared me the pain of knowing that I was an object of pain and dread to you, or very much the same thing."

As Hope lifted her blue eyes in pained surprise, Charlie Caverley was gazing very gravely down upon her. She could not imagine he could look so stern. The colour quite died out of her cheek. She gave a broken murmur—what she said she did not know.

"Forgotten what you said!" he exclaimed, as if repeating her words. "I cannot forget so easily. And, then, I have it in black and white, you know," with a painful smile, as he passed on in response to a merry call—for Charlie was a favourite with the ladies.

Hope could have thrown herself down on

the grass, like a child, and cried in sorrow and despair.

Was this captious treatment all the reward she was to get for confessing the truth so bravely?

Her father's displeasure, her mother's disappointment, Aunt Sabra's scolding, she had prepared herself to receive—but this was too much; the hot tears welled to her eyes.

There were other gentlemen of the party who thought Hope pretty and attractive, but she listened to everybody in an absent-minded way, and at last the festive afternoon was over.

"May I come up at eight this evening, Hope?" asked Bevan Berkeley, at parting.

He looked at her in a cheerful, confident way, which bewildered her.

"He hopes to make me change my mind," she thought.

"Certainly," she said, with a visible reluctance.

She was not quite sure, as she glanced at Charlie's grave, averted face, at the supper-table, that she would not take Bevan, after all, out of pure forlornness,—it was so disheartening to miss the radiant smile—the tenderness, she had unconsciously anticipated!

But when her old lover's straw-coloured beard brushed her cheek, she shivered.

"Please don't, Bevan—I told you!" she exclaimed.

"Yes—that you loved me best."

"No—that I loved him best!" cried Hope, hysterically. "I can't help it—I do!"

Poor Bevan's eyes looked more like blue porcelain than ever as he stared at her.

"You told me—" he began.

"Oh, what did I tell you?" cried Hope, desperately, as she tore the letter he presented from his hand.

She glanced over the sheet and turned red.

"I—I put the letters in the wrong envelopes!" she faltered.

"Then this was intended for Caverley," asked Berkeley, stiffening.]

Hope nodded.

In vain he called her fickle, a coquette, a flirt. She only cried until he went away. Then she flung herself, face downwards, upon the sofa, and the excitement and fatigue lulled her into drowsiness at last.

She went to sleep, thinking this a very forlorn world; and woke up to find it a very bright one, for Charlie Caverley was smiling over her.

"Dear little Hope!" he cried, "I know all; I got the wrong letter."

"You did!" she answered.

E. S. K.

THE ROAD TO TRUE PHILOSOPHY is precisely the same with that which leads to true religion; and from both one and the other, unless we would enter in as little children, we expect to be totally excluded.

THE SENSES OF THE CHAMOIS.—The senses of sight, hearing, and smell of the chamois are developed to a maximum, and this fact, taken in association with the animal's great sure-footedness among the lofty, snow-covered Alps, in which it has its home, makes hunting it a task of no mean difficulty and danger. Dogs are of no service on the rocky eminences to which the chamois will retreat when it is pursued, and the sportsman has to rely upon his own sure-footedness and courage in climbing the steep and slippery precipices, whither he is tempted by the sight of game. If so hard pressed that it is driven to some height beyond which it cannot go, it is said that it will precipitate itself upon its pursuer, sending him down into the depths below. Besides man, the eagle is an enemy, whose constant endeavour is to obtain the kids from their watchful mothers. Its skin is much valued for its toughness combined with its pliability. Its flesh is also greatly esteemed.—*Cassell's Natural History.*

FACETIE.

BILLY's little sister had fallen and hurt her nose, and she cried a great deal over it. Hearing his mother tell her to be careful lest she'd spoil it next time, he said: "What's the good of a nose to her? she never blows it."

At the court of Queen Elizabeth Sir Walter Raleigh was one day asking a favour of the queen, when she said: "Raleigh, when will you cease to be a beggar?" "When your majesty leaves off bestowing favours," he replied.

COULDN'T HELP IT.—Ethel used to play a good deal in school. One day she had been very quiet. She sat up prim, and behaved so nicely that after lessons were over the teacher remarked, "Ethel, my dear, you were a very good little girl to-day." "Yes'm. I couldn't help being good; I dot a tiff neck!"

A MAN passing along the street saw two children, apparently five and six years old, playing in the gutter. The elder wore pantaloon, while the younger still clung to infantile dresses. Stopping, he addressed the boy with pantaloons. "Are you both boys?" "No," was the answer. "I'm one, and Johnny's going to be next week."

A NEW CAREER.—Smith (to Brown, who has inherited money): "I congratulate you, Brown, upon your good fortune. What do you expect to do, now that you are rich?" Brown: "Nothing. I shall give up business, and try and live like a gentleman, that's all." Smith: "Ah, yes, I see. Well, I hope you will meet with success, old man, but it will be a great change for you. Good-day."

THEY were spooning in a dark corner. He took her hand, and looked into the shining depths of her blue eyes. "Marie," he said, in a low, emotional tone, "you know I would not speak if I did not mean it. I will tell the truth. I am poor, hard up. If you can only—" "I'm so sorry. I left my purse upstairs; but perhaps Brother Harry can lend you a few shillings. I'll call him." He was taken with a sudden headache, and went home.

THE THIRD PARTY.—Maud and her George were in the parlour, and Maud's father was laying down his political tenets to Maud's George. "I tell you," he exclaimed, "the Liberal and Conservative parties embody all there is of wisdom in party management. We don't want any third party here." "That is it precisely, papa," replied Maud, "a third party is a nuisance anywhere." Maud's father counted noses, concluded he was the third party, and withdrew from the field.

HIS SUGGESTION.—It is said that Artemus Ward once travelled on a road on which trains were run at a snail's pace. With a twinkle of his off eye, Artemus called the guard. "Look here," said he, in the inimitable drawl which made him famous; "is there any objection to passengers offering little suggestions as to improvements in the way of running this road?" "Not in the least," said the conductor. "If suggestions are made in the proper spirit, we are delighted to give attention to them." "Well," said Artemus, "I would like to suggest that the cow-catcher be put on the rear of the train, for, at the present rate we are travelling, what is to prevent a cow from strolling in the back end of the train and biting the passengers?"

COMPELLED TO DO IT.

It was a case of breach of promise. The defendant was allowed to say a word in his own behalf.

"Yes," he said, "I kissed her almost continually every evening I called at her house."

"Then you confess it?"

"Yes, I do confess it, but I had to do it."

"You had to do it. What do you mean?"

"That was the only way I could keep her from singing."

The jury gave a verdict for the defendant without leaving their seats.

"CURIOUS, isn't it?" remarked Mrs. Bascom. "Here I've been reading these 'Notes on Husbandry' regularly ever since we subscribed to the Farmer, and they haven't said one word, as far as I can see, about husbands or matrimony either."

SMALL Gertrude (five years old): "Mamma, I quite agree with you." Mamma: "Why, my child, what does agree mean?" "When two persons think alike." "What does disagree mean?" "When one person thinks alike."

A CENTRAL old bachelor, who firmly believes that all women have something to say on all subjects, recently asked a female friend: "Well, madam, what do you hold on this question of female suffrage?" To him the lady responded, calmly: "Sir, I hold my tongue."

IT WAS in a restaurant. A big man and a little man stood side by side. "Gimme the salt, please," said the little man. "I'm not the waiter," said the big man, in a surly tone. "Excuse me," was the retort. "It was a mistake anyone might have made."

"YOUR worship," said the prisoner to the magistrate, "this policeman arrested me while I was quietly attending to my own business, and making no noise or disturbance whatever." "What is your business?" asked the magistrate. "I'm a burglar."

WHAT a poetess practically refers to in "warm paleness" is something almost identical with the hue of a man's face who struggles wildly on the perilous edge of an orange peel, reclining at length on the pavement, and is too pious to be profane.

YOUNG HUSBAND: "Now, love, which will you have—the chateleine watch, the bracelets, or the necklace?" YOUNG WIFE: "We must avoid unnecessary expenses, dear. I'm sure if you buy all three the man will give you a reduction on them. I'm your own saving, economical little wifey, ain't I?"

"DO you think, mamma," said a little one, "that Uncle Reuben is a good man?" "Why, my child, he is the best of all my brothers, and an excellent man." "And will he go to heaven?" "I think so, my child. Why do you ask?" "Oh, nothing much," waking from a sort of reverie; "I was thinking what a handsome angel he would make—that's all."

AND now the small boy unravels the ancient stocking to secure yarn with which to make a cricket-ball. And when he has the ball made, he cuts the leg off one of his father's boots to make a cover off. And when the parent discovers the liberties taken with his boot the small boy wishes he had used it as a lining for his trousers.

"MA," said Johnny, one Saturday morning, "where do good little boys go?" "To heaven, I suppose," replied ma. "I don't mean when they're dead," answered Johnny, in a tone of disgust. "Where do they go when they are alive?" "I don't know," remarked the mother, absently; "I suppose they stay at home with their mammas." "Oh!" said Johnny; "oh! I thought, maybe, their mammas sometimes took them to see a pantomime."

HE: "I told Mr. Bluff what you said, Clara; that you felt really insulted that he should come into your presence in his shirt-sleeves." SHE: "I am sorry you told him, John; it is needless to make the poor fellow feel bad about it; I don't imagine he thought about his appearance. But what did he say?" HE: Oh! he said if he had known that you objected to shirt-sleeves, he should have rolled them up out of sight."

PROFESSOR (to lazy student): "You tell me you have made no failures in life thus far?" STUDENT: "It is true." PROFESSOR (musingly): "It is singular, very singular; with such a disposition, I cannot account for it. Student: "I can." PROFESSOR: "Pray tell me the reason." STUDENT (cheerfully): "I never attempted to succeed, you know."

"WELL, how did you like the sermon to-day?" "The sermon?" "Yes; you were at church, were you not?" "Why, yes, certainly." "Then you can tell me how you liked the sermon. I suppose; you heard it, didn't you?" "Heard it? Certainly not. I belong to the choir."

CHARLEY isn't always correct in his pronunciation, but he is apt to state the facts very clearly. He rushed into the house the other day and cried:—"Oh, ma, that tooth does ache. I'll bet it's ulcerated." It couldn't have been hotter even with an ulcer on.

"YES, sir," said a pompous manufacturer, "I consider myself a benefactor of the human race. I feed two hundred people in my factory!" "You do," replied a bystander. "Goodness! and all the time I was under the impression that they fed you!"

"WHEN I marry," said a budding school-girl, "I'll want a tall, fine-looking man." "There's where you are wrong, sis," observed the more practical sister. "You'll have less trouble watching an ugly man, and enjoy more of his company."

YOUNG WIFE: "I am determined to learn at just what hour my husband comes home at night; yet, do what I will, I cannot keep awake, and he is always careful not to make a particle of noise. Is there any drug which produces wakefulness?" OLD WIFE: "No need to buy drugs. Sprinkle the floor with tacks."

JUDGE (to darty witness):—"Do you know the nature of an oath?" WITNESS:—"Sah?" JUDGE:—"Do you understand what you are to swear to?" WITNESS:—"Yes, sah. I'm to swear to tell de trof." JUDGE:—"And what happens if you do not tell it?" WITNESS:—"I specs our side 'I win de case, sah."

"FOR what we are about to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful," devoutly murmured Dusenbury, sitting with folded hands at the dinner-table. Then, looking disdainfully over the dishes set before him, he snarled, "Good gracious, Maria! how many times do you want me to tell me that I don't hanker for cold mutton more than three times in one week?"

CHARLEY wanted to give Mira a present, but he couldn't make up his mind what it should be; so the next time he called he frankly told her the difficulty under which he was labouring. "Want to make me a present, Charley?" Mira exclaimed, in well disguised astonishment. "Why, Charley, you forget yourself." Charley took the hint, and offered himself on the spot.

"FAST trains are getting to be all the rage," observed a guard to an acquaintance, "but our 'limited' is still the fastest one in the business." "Oh, no," said the passenger; "nearly every day I take a train that runs so fast that your 'limited' could not keep up with it five seconds." "What train is that?" "A train of thought."

"YES, sir," said a pompous ignoramus, "I believe in education, sir—the best education that money can buy. My father spared no expense on my schooling, and I shall spare none on my children's." "Then I suppose you will give them all an academic education," remarked his friend. "Yes, sir," was the reply, "of course I will. That's the kind of education that I got, and if it takes every farthing of my fortune, my boys and girls shall all be macadamised as their father was."

At a military dinner the following was on the toast-list as the toast of a veteran's health:—"May this hero, who has lost one eye in the glorious service of his beloved country, never see distress with the other!" But the person whose duty it was to read the toast completely changed the sentiment, and caused no end of merriment by accidentally omitting the word "distress," so that the toast read, "And may he never see with the other."

SOCIETY.

HER MAJESTY will open Parliament in person on the 21st with all the usual State. The Prince and Princess of Wales and the rest of the Royal Family in London are to attend, and the ceremony is expected to be more than usually imposing, even for similar occasions.

HER MAJESTY will attend the special performance of *Mors et Vita* to be given in February at the Albert Hall. Gounod is one of the Queen's favourite composers, and has more than once been favoured with commissions from Her Majesty.

TOWARDS the end of the month the Prince of Wales will go to Cannes, and stay on the Riviera for about a fortnight or three weeks.

ACCOMPANYING the general improvement in the condition of Princess Christian, says an unusually well-informed contemporary, is a welcome increase of appetite and cheerfulness.

THE Princess Louise some time ago made up her mind to study the violoncello. Every one thought she would soon tire of the drudgery necessary to acquire a knowledge of the instrument. Her Royal Highness, however, still perseveres, and is making great progress.

IN the notices that have appeared referring to the death of the late Lady Fanny Howard, the fact seems to have been overlooked that this eminent representative of the Cavendish family was the daughter of the Earl of Suffolk, and that Lady Fanny was a great favourite in the house of the late Duchess of Kent. She was a gifted florist, and to her Eastbourne owes its floral beauty.

ON the last day of the old year the marriage between Captain George F. Campbell Mackenzie (Suffolk Regiment), eldest son of Major Francis Mackenzie and Miss Emily Mary Boulton, eldest daughter of the late Captain Boulton (14th King's Hussars) and Mrs. Boulton, of Brantwood, Bournemouth, was celebrated at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge.

THE five bridesmaids were tastefully dressed in white canvas, the bodices having collars, cuffs, and revers of white plush, and the skirts panels of the same edged with white silk balls, the canvas drapery being caught up on one side with plush rosettes; small white plush bonnets, pointed in front, and trimmed with white satin. Each wore a gold brooch with "M" in pearls, the bridegroom's gift, and carried a bouquet of red geraniums.

THE bride wore a bodice and train of white striped velvet, the petticoat of white satin being draped with Brussels point lace, the gift of her grandmother. She wore a wreath of orange blossom and tulle veil, fastened by two diamond stars, her mother's gift, her other ornaments being also of diamonds. After breakfast the newly-married pair left on their wedding tour.

A VERY stylish wedding recently took place between Mr. Robert George Arbuthnot and Miss Helen Mary, youngest daughter of Sir William Muir, Principal of the University of Edinburgh, and Lady Muir.

THE bride was attired in satin duchesse, made with a long train, and trimmed with a flounce of fine antique lace, looped up with bunches of white heather and jessamine to match the wreath. The veil was of plain tulle, fastened with three diamond stars, and she also wore diamond bracelets, both gifts of the bridegroom.

THE six bridesmaids wore white silk pointed dresses, trimmed with white fur; hats and muffs to correspond. The dresses were trimmed with bouquets of pink carnations, mignonette, and mistletoe, which were fastened by small brooches in diamonds in the form of swallows, the gifts of the bridegroom.

THE bride's travelling dress was of an Indian material of a pale golden-brown shade, worked over with fine hand-wrought embroidery, and trimmed with velours girafée; hat and muff to correspond.

STATISTICS.

AN examination by Dr. William Ogle of the mortality statistics, extending over a considerable number of years, shows that the death-rate among clergymen is lower than in any other occupation. If the mortality for the three years, 1880-82, among ministers be represented by 556, that among farmers will be denoted by 681, among lawyers by 841, and physicians 1,122.

POULTRY AND GAME.—People have often wondered where all the poultry and game that are displayed in the pouterers' shops in London at Christmas come from, and, perhaps, many of our readers will be surprised to hear that Ireland annually feeds 1,883,653 geese and 706,612 turkeys, and something like 7,500,000 common domestic fowls, the whole of which may be roughly valued at £1,023,365. During 1885 the United Kingdom, including the Isle of Man, raised 1,288,174 turkeys. The chief turkey-rearing counties of England are:—Devonshire, 23,218; Essex, 13,088; Hereford, 16,268; Hants, 10,992; Norfolk, 46,324; Salop, 17,295; Suffolk, 30,802; Somerset, 15,199; York, 22,275. As regards common domestic fowls, the largest number is to be found in Sussex, i.e., 317,712. Surrey's barndoor yield is about 189,086 head, and the value of the whole poultry stock of the United Kingdom has been computed, at the price obtained by the rearers, at no less a sum than three and a-quarter millions sterling.

GEMS.

IT is better to sow a good heart with kindness than a field with corn, for the heart's harvest is perpetual.

THE first ingredient in conversation is truth, the next good sense, the third good humour, and the fourth wit.

AS we grow in years and experience we become more tolerant, for it is rare to see a fault we have not ourselves committed.

WEDDINGS often leave old familiar hearts and places as haunted and empty as funerals. They are the funerals of old associations.

PERHAPS as a mere matter of government, a good depot would make a better government; but for the education of the people governed, a good despotism is worse than freedom with its admixture of folly.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

COFFEE CAKE.—One cupful of seeded and chopped raisins; one cupful of sugar; half a cupful of butter; half a cupful of cold, strong coffee; half a cupful of treacle; two and a half cups of sifted flour; two eggs well beaten; one teaspoonful of powdered cloves; half a teaspoonful of cinnamon; one and a half teaspoonfuls of baking powder.

CREAM CHEESE.—Bore some holes with a gimlet in the bottom of a small box—a fig box is suitable. Lay a piece of scalded calico in the box, fill it with thick or "double" cream, fold the calico over, put on the lid, and leave it in an equable temperature for forty-eight hours. To bury the box two feet deep for two days is an old receipt. At the end of forty-eight hours, above or underground, there is in the box a cheese, which should be taken out, put in an airy place, and turned every day until it is ripe.

FARINA JELLY.—Boil three pints of milk, and whilst boiling sprinkle in slowly one-quarter of a pound or four large tablespoonfuls of Hether's farina. Continue the boiling for about three-quarters of an hour. When done, turn into a jelly mould and place it on the ice or in cold water to stiffen. It makes a beautiful ornament when turned out for the table, and may be eaten with wine or other sauce more pleasing to the taste, or with pulverised sugar and cream.

MISCELLANEOUS.

MORE than eleven thousand dishes of fruit were exhibited at the Apple and Pear Congress recently held in Edinburgh. Six thousand came from Scotland alone.

M. PASTEUR, the distinguished French physiologist, is to have a prince for a student. Prince Charles Theodore of Bavaria is going to Paris to receive instruction in the line of researches which have led to the discoveries concerning the treatment of hydrophobia that excite so much interest everywhere.

AGREEABLE WORK ROOMS.—The places where human beings do their daily work ought to be pleasant and healthy. Many men spend more time in their shops or offices than they do anywhere else, and we are all constantly affected in our feelings and character by the objects that surround us. We owe it to ourselves to labour in as clean, as orderly, and even as elegant a place as the nature of our work permits. Men will do better work in a light, dry, pleasant room than in one which is damp, and unclean.

TELEGRAPHY IN CHINA.—According to *Nature*, the Chinese will soon have their country covered with a network of telegraph lines. There is already a direct line from Peking through Canton to the frontier of Tonquin, across the empire from north to south, and important branches are in rapid process of construction. "In the great movement towards a centralised government now in progress in China," says that journal, "the telegraph line will play an important part, for it will utterly destroy the semi-independence of the provincial viceroys, hitherto secure in the remoteness from the seat of government." The provinces will really be ruled by telegraph from Peking.

A CURIOUS phenomenon in the climate of south-eastern India is mentioned by Colonel B. R. Branfill, in the Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London. "A noticeable feature in the meteorology of this coast," he says, "is the frequent lightning storms, which occur daily for weeks together, before the setting in of the south-west monsoon, unaccompanied by rain or by any sound of thunder. They occur with most frequency in those districts where land and sea breezes alternate with considerable regularity.

A VERY rich collection of natural history specimens has been made by the officers of the Italian war vessel, *Vittor Pisani*, in a recent voyage around the world. These plants and animals are at the Zoological Station at Naples, under the direction of Professor Anton Dohrn, and the government of Italy, through a committee of scientific men, invites competent students from all countries to study the specimens and write upon them.

TO MAKE TRANSLUCENT PAPER.—Take a negative on the paper and pin it, paper side up, on a board. Apply butter (cold) all over it, with the fingers; put on plenty. Then hold the negative over a paraffin stove, with the flame turned low. The butter will at once begin to melt. While it is melting, hold it in the left hand, and with the fingers of the right keep the melting butter moving over the less greased portions, and with the left hand move the negative about. Continue till an even surface is obtained, which will be in about five minutes or less, depending on the size of the negative. Then lay, paper side still up, on a board or cloth, and, while warm, rub off the surplus butter with tufts of cotton wool; it will probably be necessary to rewarm the negatives several times during this operation. Should any butter, by chance, get on the film side of the negative, warm it and rub it with cotton wool, and it will at once come off. Give a final rub with cotton wool dipped in alcohol, and the negative is ready to print from, and has a fine ground-glass appearance.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

TOTTIE.—There is no such place.

M. R. AND M. C.—We never insert such notices.

TOM.—Take a series of lessons in elocution, which will in all probability effect a cure.

LILY R.—Marriage licences (not special) are procurable at Doctors' Commons.

F. H.—Any currier or leather-dresser will give you the information you seek.

V. M. H.—Apply to a chemist for a pink sauce that will serve your purpose.

CORINNE.—The first telegraph erected in England was on January 23, 1796.

P. MOLLOY.—The Union Act for Ireland passed July 2, 1800, and took place January 1, 1801.

F. S.—Steep a few bay leaves in a small quantity of the best rum, keeping the vessel well covered for, say, a couple of days, when it will be fit for use.

G. S. M.—The name "William" is derived from the Dutch, and was originally "Gulld Helm"—harnessed with a gilded helmet.

D. C. L.—The cholera first appeared in Edinburgh July 6, 1832, and in London the 14th of the same month.

DANEY.—Lucas Van Leyden was a Dutch painter in oil, also an engraver. His great picture was the History of Sir Hubert.

R. B. T.—Benzoin is a medical kind of resin, imported from the East Indies, and vulgarly called Benjamin.

X. R. F.—1. Do not tamper with the instrument, but consult a pianoforte manufacturer. 2. Your hair is certainly of more than the ordinary length.

REARER.—Apply to the clergyman of your parish; either incumbent or curate will gladly put you in the right path.

T. N. L.—It is not quite prudent for a young woman to give her carte to one of the opposite sex if he be not a relation or a dear friend.

G. M. B.—Gretina Green marriages were rendered illegal, and so stopped, by Lord Brougham's Act, which came into operation on January 1, 1857.

J. B. M.—Why not apply personally, or by letter, to the address you give? If by letter, your question will be answered by the post-office clerk through the returned letter office.

G. L. G.—The circumference of the globe is twenty-five thousand and twenty miles. A tunnel through the earth from England to New Zealand would be about 8,000 miles long.

C. W. W.—1. The acid you name may be obtained of any chemist. 2. Apply to an ink manufacturer, who would supply you at a lower cost than you could make it yourself.

R. L. D.—We cannot consent to vouch for the reliability of the business firm, or to question its standing, having no personal knowledge of its manner of dealing with customers, its capital, &c.

D. M. C.—Michael John Sedaine was a French dramatic writer; wrote several comic operas and plays. Some have been translated into English, such as *Richard Coeur de Lion* and *Blue Beard*.

J. B. B.—The signification of the name Julia is soft-haired, a designation well exemplified in your case, as the look enclosed is of a most delicate, velvety description.

L. C. W.—Commissioners in the Royal Navy are not to be purchased. You would have to pass an examination in the ordinary branches of education, also in navigation and the other specialties of the profession.

H. I. R.—Orris root used moderately is not injurious; far better, however, to ascertain by application to a medical man the cause of your requiring it. It may arise from some disarrangement of the system which it is in the power of medical science to remove.

A. D. M.—A good recipe for whitening the hands is as follows: A wineglassful of eau de Cologne, and one of lemon juice, two cakes of brown Windsor soap, mixed well together, when hard, will form an excellent substance.

LENNY.—Janissaries is derived from two Turkish words, "sani" and "shiri," implying "new soldiers" (a Turkish militia), created by Amurath I. for the purpose of defending the throne, and setting on the frontiers of the kingdom.

T. T. W.—Get the pen-and-ink drawings reproduced by means of the photo-engraving process, which is both exact and satisfactory. Drawings made with copying ink would not be likely to give satisfaction when passed through a copying press.

S. B. M.—We have no faith in the person you name; far better apply to a non-advertising medical man, or to the surgeon of the day of the nearest hospital. You would do the latter if you have any real regard for your health.

W. H. P.—1. There are many such homes for girls. Advise the mother to apply to the clergyman of her parish. 2. You can procure coloured fire at almost any toy shop, or the materials to make it from a firework manufacturer.

POOR SCHOLAR.—"Tout entier," entirely so; "Mari," husband; "Pere," father; "Tout au contraire," quite the reverse; "Orde experto," believe an expert, i.e., trust to the experienced. The other phrases of which you ask explanation are misquoted.

LIZIE.—One of the best methods for preserving apples through the winter is to pack them in barrels or boxes, surrounding each apple with some dry mould and gypsum (plaster of Paris)—not the calcined used for casts, models, &c.—and kept in a cool, dry out-house.

G. H. R.—There has been much controversy as to who was the composer of the music and who was the author of the words of "God Save the King." It is pretty generally, however, believed that it was composed by Dr. John Bull, in 1667, for King James I.

LIZIE.—The process of writing or drawing on glass can be done by procuring some French chalk; place the glass on a table, and, while breathing on it, write with the chalk; after that wipe it with a damp cloth; when dry, the drawing will disappear; breathe on it again and it will return.

THE LITTLE LAME GIRL.

She was lame, and she sat by the window,
Singing like any bird;
And from her pretty, smiling lips
Came never a fretful word.
Backwards and forwards her needle
Busily went to her song;
And there she sat by the window,
Working the whole day long.

"O, beautiful little maiden,
It would be happy for thee
If thou couldst only wander
Over meadow and lee."
She lifted her eyes in wonder,
And said, with a gentle smile:
"My rose-tree stands in the window—
Stands in it all the while."

"O, fresh and bright are its colours,
And sweet are its crimson flowers;
Good and fair is the tree to me
All through the busy hours.
Can I not also be useful,
Pleasant and good and sweet,
Though it hath pleased my Creator
To bind, in His love, my feet?"

"Out of the dangerous highways,
Out of the hurry and fright,
Here I sit in my window—
Sit in the warmth and light;
Sit in the peace and the shelter,
Happily doing my task,
Mother-love watching near me—
What is there more to ask?"

"Into the lives that are brightest,
Some rain is certain to fall;
Fortune gives many gifts to some,
But no one ever gets all.
I am content with my portion,"
And she lifted her happy face,
"For I, like the rose in my window,
Can brighten my own little place."

L. E. B.

H. H.—Judging from your communication, your chances of success on the "stage" would be small indeed; a ballet girl's career is not a "path of roses." Take our advice, abandon the intention, for although one in a thousand obtains a success, the nine hundred and ninety-nine gain but a wretched pittance and many heart-burnings.

A. B. R.—1. The rose is regarded as the queen of flowers. 2. Dark grey eyes are not unbecoming to persons of dark complexion. 3. Blondes and brunettes have their admirers throughout the world, and, after all, beauty is as much a matter of opinion as anything else. 4. "Black-eyed" beauties are not uncommon.

A. B. L.—By no means use paint for the face; it is frequently composed of mineral poison, and thus is dangerous to life. A celebrated Belgian singer (M. Zolger) some time since met his death by swallowing, by accident, a small portion of the paint he had used. The best recipe for health and beauty is cold water, fresh air, and exercise.

L. W.—We agree with you. In no wine-drinking country is the degrading vice of drunkenness so prevalent as in England. To this Adam Smith testified long since in the following paragraph: "The cheapness of wine seems to be a great cause, not of drunkenness, but of sobriety. The inhabitants of the wine countries are, in general, the soberest people in Europe."

S. H. T.—1. We know of no ring flirtation. 2. The alphabet of gems is as follows: Amethyst, beryl, chrysoberyl, diamond, emerald, fire opal, garnet, hyacinth, idocrase, jacinth, kyanite, lynx sapphire, moonstone, nephrite, opal, peridot, quartz, ruby, sapphire, topaz, uranite, vesuvianite, water sapphire, xanthite, yanolite, zircon. To form your name, a sapphire, an amethyst, a ruby and an aquamarine should be set in a ring. 3. An amethyst denotes sobriety; a cornelian, self-sacrifice; a diamond, brilliancy; an emerald, purity; a garnet, friendship; an opal, inconstancy; a ruby, love; a sapphire, fidelity; a topaz, deception; a tourmaline, sadness.

M. K. N.—The following is an infallible cure for a simple ulcerated sore throat: Dissolve a teaspoonful of chloroform of potash in a tumbler of water and gargle with it. It is nearly tasteless, and not at all offensive to take, and well adapted to children. A weak solution of the same is also an excellent remedy for chapped or cracked hands. Any druggist will supply you with it.

PUZZLER.—A tally was a notched stick cut in conformity to another stick. By tallies it was that our unlettered ancestors kept their accounts—nay, by certain small tradesmen in the provinces they are even now in use. It was the burning of the National Exchange tallies, which had accumulated for centuries, that caused the destruction, by fire, of the old House of Parliament.

R. B. W.—Procure some standard work on grammar, and occupy your spare time in the study of the construction of sentences, the formation of words and subjects. In this way a thorough understanding of the English language may be obtained. In conversation never strain after effect by using ponderous words, but speak naturally, and no trouble will be experienced in finding words of sufficient calibre to express your thoughts in such a way that all may understand your meaning.

LADY MAY.—"Kleptomaniac" comes from two Greek words, and means a mania for thieving. Very rich people are sometimes afflicted with it. 2. The stamp flirtation was given in No. 1023. 3. Hair a pretty auburn brown, certainly not ginger. 4. We have not, we regret, the receipt at present. 5. Lucy means "bright;" Mary, "bitter;" Martha, "domestic;" Ruth, "sorrow;" Robert, "famous in council;" George, "a husbandman;" Henry, "rich at home."

C. B. R.—Your remedy for nasal catarrh is well known. It might relieve some, but we do not think any intelligent physician would expect it to cure a well-established chronic case. Ammonia is frequently recommended as a hair wash. It has exactly the effect of a strong soap; a mild soap will act just as well in cleansing the scalp, and is less likely to injure the hair. The natural history and habits of the "hair-worms," or *trichinae*, are so well known that no man who can read has any excuse for clinging to the most improbable hypothesis that they are produced from horse-hair.

W. M.—Parents should always be perfectly familiar with the character of their daughter's associates—both male and female—and they should exercise their authority so far as to strenuously object to her forming improper acquaintances. Thus it is in the case quoted; they consider that the man is not a proper one to whom you should trust your future happiness, and consequently have warned you and withheld their sanction of the marriage. You had better investigate the ugly reports concerning his character, and if you find him innocent present the proofs to your parents. This having been done, no sensible father or mother would object to the union.

L. D. R.—The white keys of a piano may be very easily and nicely cleaned by first removing the front fall and slip of wood fitting over them. Then lift up each key separately from the front—do not take them out—and rub the keys with a white cloth slightly dampened with cold water, and dry off with a cloth slightly warm. Should the keys be sticky, first dampen the cloth with a little spirits of wine or gin. Under no circumstances use soap. A piano or organ should not be kept closed, but on the contrary left open as much as possible, as otherwise the keys will turn quite yellow. It is much easier to remove the dust than to clean the keys.

C. R. R.—We think you decided sensibly. So many women involve their husbands in difficulties by reporting themselves insulted by men. The husband is then bound to "make a fuss," and the fuss often ends in scandal and newspaper notoriety, if not in bloodshed. A woman can usually act in such matters herself. She can repel an insult in such a way that it will never be repeated. There need be no bluster or virago talk about it. Just a look, a gesture, a determined flash of the eye is enough. Men are very easily repelled if a woman is in earnest in her resentment. It is the lukewarm repulsion, the eye or the tone contradicting the words, that is easily recognised by men as not final and positive, and that holds out a finger of encouragement.

THE LONDON READER, Post-free. Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Nightingale.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS AND VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 234, Now Ready, price Sixpence, post free, Nightingale. Also Vol. XLV., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

! We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. R. Speck; and Printed by WOODFALL and KNEVES, Milford Lane, Strand.